

THE SECOND TENNESSEE CAVALRY IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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General Studies

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ABSTRACT

THE SECOND TENNESSEE CAVALRY IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, by Major Stirling D. Popejoy, U.S. Army, 107 pages.

This thesis examines the history of the Second (Ashby's) Tennessee Cavalry Regiment during the American Civil War. The goal is to determine how the Second Tennessee Cavalry contributed to the Confederate war effort. This study will analyze the operations the unit conducted, the tactical tasks it executed, and the outcomes of the regiment's actions. This analysis will be used to determine if the regiment was effective at executing its assigned missions and if it aided Confederate commanders in achieving desired effects on the battlefield.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The histories of military units involved in the American Civil War have been of interest to amateur and professional historians for generations. Over time, much research has been done to gain a better understanding of regimental level units and the roles they played in the war. However, finding information about some of these units can be difficult. This study will examine the actions and operations of one such regiment that has remained in the background of the history of the American Civil War.

The Confederate Army of Tennessee had many storied cavalry units that played important roles in the course and outcome of the army's operations. One of these, the Second (Ashby's) Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, participated in numerous engagements during the war. Despite the Second Tennessee Cavalry's contributions to the Confederate cause, few historians have devoted much attention to the regiment, its battlefield performance, or its actions during the American Civil War.

Although the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment did not officially form until mid-1862, its story actually began in August 1861 when two cavalry battalions were mustered into service near Knoxville. Within months, these battalions found themselves engaged in operations in Kentucky under the command of Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer. In May 1862, the regiment officially formed as a consequence of the consolidation of these two cavalry battalions and became part of Major General Edmund

Kirby Smith's command in East Tennessee.¹ In the fall of 1862, the regiment followed Smith into Kentucky and covered his army's retreat back to East Tennessee following the Confederate defeat at Perryville. Within a couple of months, the regiment had moved to Murfreesboro and participated in the Battle of Stones River.² After Stones River, the Second Tennessee Cavalry returned to East Tennessee and subsequently conducted operations in Kentucky. In late 1863, the unit moved south to face the Union Army at Chickamauga as a part of Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest's corps.³ In 1864, the unit struggled to thwart the efforts of Major General William Tecumseh Sherman as he moved his Federal force toward Atlanta. In 1865, the Second Tennessee Cavalry continued its desperate fight against Sherman until General Joseph E. Johnston finally surrendered his army in Durham, North Carolina.⁴

Primary Research Question

What was the contribution of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment to the Confederate Army?

Significance of the Study

As outlined above, there has been little historical research specifically devoted to the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. This thesis will attempt to expand on this body

¹Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans in the Civil War: A Military History of Confederate and Union Units with Available Rosters of Personnel*, vol 1. (Nashville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1964), 52-54.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

of knowledge and determine how the Second Tennessee Cavalry contributed to the Confederate war effort. In addition to gaining a better understanding of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, this research may also provide insight into the organizations the unit served in, the operations the regiment participated in, and a greater understanding of the larger military, political, and cultural dynamics that shaped the war in Tennessee.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment is an organization that has had little attention paid to it by professional researchers and few studies have been published that are specifically dedicated to a history of the organization. On the one hand, historians have captured some details about the organization in the context of the histories of larger commands that the regiment belonged to. However, it is difficult to gain an understanding of the detailed maneuvers and actions of the unit due to limited research specifically focused on it. Fortunately, there are a handful of publications that shed light on the actions and activities of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment.

Primary Source Review

Primary sources specifically associated with the personnel and activities of the Second Tennessee Cavalry are limited. A review of published writings devoted to Ashby's Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment indicate a heavy reliance upon *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* for source material. In some instances, authors have obtained primary source information from Confederate pension applications. Nonetheless, a few firsthand accounts do exist and are in the possession of government organizations within the State of Tennessee.

The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, or *Official Records*, serves as one of the most important sources for firsthand accounts of the activities of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment and the

organizations to which the regiment was assigned. This compilation of records is a significant source of primary source material produced by officers and commanders on both sides of the conflict. These records have long served as a key source of information for American Civil War researchers.⁵

The diary of Andrew Jackson Williams, a member of Company A of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, is located at East Tennessee State University and provides insights into the operations of the unit. A native of Tennessee, Williams participated in numerous raids as a member of the 62nd Tennessee Infantry until he was captured in Georgia. Following his escape from captivity, Williams joined the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment in April 1864. His diary provides insight into the unit's operations against Major General William Tecumseh Sherman's forces and a soldier's perspective at the tactical level.⁶

Another primary source that exists is *The Diary of Samuel Blair Tate, Confederate Soldier*. Two libraries in Tennessee have copies of this diary, which chronicles the wartime service of a member of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Although the author of this study was able to obtain a portion of the diary from the Knoxville Public Library system, it provided limited information about the Second

⁵*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Hereafter cited as *OR*.

⁶Andrew Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers, 1908-1910*, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University. Williams joined the 62nd Tennessee after the unit surrendered at Vicksburg and returned to East Tennessee.

Tennessee Cavalry. The majority of the diary focused on Blair's daily activities in and around Knoxville.⁷

In time, the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment became a part of Confederate Major General Joseph Wheeler's Cavalry Corps. Within this corps were several regiments, including the Fifth Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, also known as Colonel George W. McKenzie's Cavalry Regiment. Beginning in 1863, McKenzie's regiment operated in many of the same locations as Ashby's Second Tennessee Cavalry. In time, McKenzie's regiment eventually fell under the command of Colonel Henry Marshall Ashby when he took command of a brigade in Wheeler's cavalry corps.

In *Reminiscences of William G. Allen: McKenzie's Fifth Tennessee Regiment*, Allen, the former regimental adjutant for the Fifth Tennessee Cavalry, offers his memories of the operations of McKenzie's unit and the organizations that it served with. This book is a compilation of a series of articles that were written for the *Dayton* (Tennessee) *Herald* and *Confederate Veteran* years after the Civil War.⁸ These articles were eventually compiled into a book for the Rhea County Historical and Genealogical Society of Tennessee. The Fifth Tennessee Cavalry participated in many of the same operations as the Second Tennessee Cavalry and Allen's memoirs are quite valuable in

⁷Samuel Tate Blair, *Diary of Samuel Tate Blair, Confederate Soldier*, McClung Collection, Knoxville County Public Library System, Knoxville, [1910].

⁸Bruce Teague, "A History of the 5th Tennessee Cavalry, CSA," <http://bruceteague.tripod.com/id89.htm> (accessed 7 November 2013).

that they provide a substantial amount of information about the operations of both cavalry regiments.⁹

In *A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War*, a former officer from the First Louisiana Cavalry Regiment describes the operations of the unit during the American Civil War. The First Louisiana Cavalry conducted operations in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia until it was recalled back to Louisiana. The regiment saw action in many of the same locations as the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. In addition, Ashby's unit temporarily fell under the command of Colonel John S. Scott, who commanded a cavalry brigade that the Second Tennessee Cavalry belonged to, and served with him at Chickamauga. This source provides firsthand accounts of some of the activities of the First Louisiana Cavalry, and indirectly, the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment.¹⁰

In 1890 Joseph Wheeler's Cavalry Association, comprised of officers who were members of Wheeler's staff, published *Campaigns of Wheeler and His Cavalry. 1862-1865*. Much of this publication consists of stories and memories of these staff officers, as well as letters and information provided by Wheeler. The publication gives insight into the operations of Wheeler's cavalry corps.¹¹

⁹William G. Allen, Bettye J. Broyles, and Carl E. Campbell, *Reminiscences of William G. Allen: McKenzie's 5th Tennessee Regiment*. ([Tennessee]: Rhea County Historical and Genealogical Society, 2000).

¹⁰Howell Carter, *A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New Orleans, LA: American Print. Co, 1900).

¹¹W. C. Dodson and Joseph Wheeler, ed., *Campaigns of Wheeler and His Cavalry. 1862-1865, From Material Furnished by Gen. Joseph Wheeler to Which Is Added His Course and Graphic Account of the Santiago Campaign of 1898* (Atlanta, GA: Hudgins-Publishing Co, 1899).

In March 1906, *Confederate Veteran* magazine published an article about Colonel Henry Marshall Ashby that was written by a former officer in the Second Tennessee Cavalry, James P. Coffin. In this article, Coffin sheds light on Ashby and provides insights into the regiment's operations. This article is one of the few primary sources of information about the commanding officer of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment.¹²

Secondary Sources

In 1965 the Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission published *Tennesseans in the Civil War: A Military History of Confederate and Union Units with Available Rosters of Personnel*. This reference work provides a brief history of both Federal and Confederate Tennessee units and lists the names of soldiers who served in these organizations. This publication provides researchers with an understanding of how the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment was organized, outlines the major movements of the organization, and provides some details about its experiences. *Tennesseans in the Civil War* has been described by one researcher as a source of information about Tennessee Civil War units that is “indispensable to families seeking to know more about their heritage.”¹³

Two other publications have helped bring to light the history of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Both are the products of genealogical research on families from East Tennessee. In *Defending the Confederate Heartland: Company F of Henry*

¹²James Coffin, “COL. Henry M. Ashby,” *Confederate Veteran*, March 1906, 121.

¹³James Williams, “The Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission: Looking to the Past as Tennessee Plans for the Future,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (Winter 2008): 29.

Ashby's 2nd Tennessee Cavalry, author James L. Mohon describes the composition, organization, and actions of Company F, Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. He follows the course of the unit's development from its initial formation in 1861 until the men returned home in 1865. In his analysis, Mohon provides information about Company F interlaced with descriptions of operations conducted by the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment as a whole. In addition, Mohon provides opinions as to whether certain engagements were successful or not. In light of the fact that the article appears in a journal, and is only forty-three pages long, there is limited room for details regarding the actions of the unit. However, the article does a great job of capturing the key moments in the Second Tennessee Cavalry's existence and gives readers good insights into the history of the organization.¹⁴

The second book derived from genealogical research is the colorfully titled *Tighten Your Girth, Slacken Your Rein*. This book looks at the Civil War experiences of four brothers from East Tennessee who served in the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. The author, Eddie Lawson, takes a unique approach by writing this book from a first-hand perspective. The first person perspective does not take away from the fact that Lawson clearly strove to provide accurate information about the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Within this book can be found detailed information that provides important specifics about the operations of the organization, along with general information regarding Confederate cavalry units. Lawson painstakingly strove to capture the story of his ancestors by detailing the operations of the unit-even going so far as to

¹⁴James L. Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee Cavalry in the Confederate Heartland," *Regimental Histories, Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil War* 4, no. 1 (1994).

travel to most, if not all, the locations where the Second Tennessee Cavalry conducted operations. This book is a valuable addition to the library of anyone researching the history of the Second Tennessee Cavalry.¹⁵

Two books will be used to gain a general understanding of cavalry operations during the Civil War. In *The Confederates and Federals at War*, H.C.B. Rogers gives a brief overview of some of the basic functions of each of the major branches of the Union and Federal Armies.¹⁶ In the cavalry section, the author offers a brief description of the organization, weapons, equipment, tactics, and technical employment of cavalry units of both armies. Although the book is targeted toward a general audience, *Confederate Cavalryman 1861-1865* by Philip Katcher touches upon many of the same topics as the *The Confederates and Federals at War*, but with a focus on Confederate forces.¹⁷

A more comprehensive understanding of the employment of cavalry, by both Union and Confederate Armies, is found in James A. Schaefer's doctoral thesis "The Tactical and Strategic Evolution of Cavalry During the American Civil War." This resource provides an explanation of the evolution of the employment of cavalry from the European tradition to the methods employed by both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. The thesis highlights early issues surrounding the organizing and

¹⁵Eddie Lawson and Donahue Bible, *Tighten Your Girth, Slacken Your Rein: A Civil War History of the Petty and Burke Families of East Tennessee* (Springboro, OH: PBR Publishing, 2005). Eddie Lawson is the primary author of this book with contributions from Donahue Bible.

¹⁶H. C. B. Rogers, *The Confederates and Federals at War* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined, 2000).

¹⁷Philip Katcher and G. A. Embleton, *Confederate Cavalryman, 1861-85* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002).

training of cavalry units and their transformation. Schaefer's work also discusses the importance of raids such as those the Second Tennessee Cavalry participated in.¹⁸

In order to gain a greater understanding of the Army of Tennessee, the organization that the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment eventually became a part of, there are three outstanding books available. The first is Stanley F. Horn's *The Army of Tennessee*. Horn's book has long been considered a classic by those conducting serious research on the Army of Tennessee. In it, Horn provides readers with a better understanding of the goals and missions of the Army of Tennessee and describes the major movements and engagements of the organization.¹⁹

Thomas L. Connelly wrote the second and third books that provide valuable information about the Army of Tennessee. In *Army of the Heartland*, Connelly explores Tennessee at the outbreak of the Civil War and the establishment of the Army of Tennessee. He then chronicles the operations of the various Confederate military departments that existed in Tennessee until the Army of Tennessee's retreat immediately following the Battle of Perryville. In *Autumn of Glory*, Connelly continues chronicling the operations of the Army of Tennessee until its final surrender in April 1865. Connelly places special emphasis on analyzing the operations of the army's cavalry units.

¹⁸James A Schaefer, "The Tactical and Strategic Evolution of Cavalry During the American Civil War" (PhD diss., University of Toledo, 1982).

¹⁹Stanley Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).

Connelly's books are essential references for anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the Army of Tennessee.²⁰

David Powell provides a critical view of the effectiveness of the Army of Tennessee's cavalry in *Failure in the Saddle: Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joe Wheeler and the Confederate Cavalry in the Chickamauga Campaign*. As implied in the title, Powell concludes that the failures of the Army of Tennessee, which have long been associated with the ineptitude of General Braxton Bragg, might need to be reconsidered in light of a more focused understanding of the actions of the cavalry units.²¹

Before and during the Civil War, most of the population of East Tennessee strongly supported the United States Government and did not support Tennessee's decision to separate from the Union. However, there were several Confederate units that originated from within this region, including the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. In his book, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* Todd Groce provides an in-depth look at the political, social, and economic climate of East Tennessee before, during, and after the Civil War.²² Groce's book is significant because he explains why men from East Tennessee took up arms for the Confederacy, who these men were, and how the soldiers and citizens of East Tennessee were impacted

²⁰Thomas Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee 1861-1863* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Thomas Connelly, *Autumn of Glory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

²¹David Powell, *Failure in the Saddle: Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joseph Wheeler, and the Confederate Cavalry in the Chickamauga Campaign* (New York: Savas Beatie LLC, 2010).

²²W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

as defeat set in on the Confederate cause. Groce's book provides insight into the external factors that influenced the Second Tennessee Cavalry and other units from East Tennessee.

CHAPTER 3

EAST TENNESSEE TO STONES RIVER

To gain insight into the operations of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment one must first understand East Tennessee in the sectional conflict. The social, economic, and political changes that took place in the years preceding the Civil War brought both opportunities and disunion to the people of the region. East Tennessee's unique geography also played an important role in influencing the operations of the Union and Confederate armies.

Tennessee is divided into three regions based on naturally occurring geographical features within the state. The fertile plains of West Tennessee closely resemble the low country of Mississippi. Middle Tennessee is primarily composed of foothills and basin with fertile lands. East Tennessee is composed of upland, often mountainous terrain.²³

When traveling into Tennessee from the east, one first encounters the Unaka and Smoky Mountains before descending into the Great Valley of East Tennessee. A bit misleading, the "Great Valley" is actually not a single valley, but a series of valleys separated by wooded mountain ridges, and is part of the Great Appalachian Valley that extends from Canada to Alabama. Continued movement to the west leads one to the Cumberland Plateau, which historically acted as a barrier to westward migration.²⁴

²³Tennessee Secretary of State, *Tennessee Blue Book* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Department of State's Publication Division, 2013), 355. The Grand Divisions are defined by Tennessee state law and recognized in the state's constitution.

²⁴Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Tennessee Secretary of State, *Tennessee Blue Book*, 355. The Great Appalachian Valley extends from Canada southwest into to Alabama.

On the outskirts of Knoxville, the Holston and French Broad Rivers combine to form the Tennessee River which flows south to Chattanooga, and into Alabama, before eventually returning to Tennessee. The Tennessee River, and its tributaries, were useful for transporting goods within East Tennessee but did not serve as a feasible transportation option to reach distant markets. Water depth issues and natural obstacles throughout the length of the Tennessee River mitigated the river's usefulness as a method of transporting goods.²⁵

In the early 1800s, Tennessee experienced significant population growth. Settlers moved to Middle and West Tennessee to take advantage of good farmland and more commodity transportation options. Unlike East Tennessee, the land in Middle and West Tennessee was excellent for the production of food, cotton, and tobacco. As crop production increased, so did the demand for slave labor.²⁶

East Tennessee was favorable for the production of agricultural commodities different than those grown to the west; namely, hogs and corn, due to the region's geography and climate. The production of these commodities did not require slave labor to maximize profits. Because of this, the large plantation systems that formed in Middle and West Tennessee did not come into existence in the eastern region of the state.²⁷

²⁵H. C. Amick, "The Great Valley of East Tennessee," *Economic Geography* 10, no. 1 (January 1934): 4; McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels*, 16. To this day, the Tennessee River serves as the major source of drainage for the Great Valley and is the dominant waterway within the region.

²⁶McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels*, 16; Tennessee Secretary of State, *Tennessee Blue Book*, 370-372.

²⁷Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 4; McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels*, 16; Tennessee Secretary of State, *Tennessee Blue Book*, 372.

By 1840, the slave population of Tennessee was expanding faster than the general population of the state. Most of this expansion occurred in West and Middle Tennessee. Because most people in East Tennessee did not own slaves, many found slavery to be harsh and inhumane, placing them sharply at odds with the citizens of Middle and West Tennessee.²⁸

In the years leading up to the Civil War, two significant changes occurred that greatly impacted the people of East Tennessee. First, wheat crops were introduced to the region, which brought significant economic opportunities. But the increase in wheat production also led to an increased demand for slave labor. Between 1850 and 1860, the total number of slaves in the region grew by 21 percent.²⁹

The introduction of rail transportation into East Tennessee was the second major development. After years of lobbying for resources, East Tennessee politicians secured funds that allowed them to build a railroad through the region. In 1855, the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad was completed to connect Knoxville to Augusta, Georgia, and markets in the Deep South. In 1858, the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad was completed, which ran from Bristol to Knoxville, connecting East Tennessee to markets on the Atlantic seaboard. Both railroads became significant generators of economic activity for East Tennessee.³⁰

²⁸Tennessee Secretary of State, *Tennessee Blue Book*, 372-392. The first newspaper in the nation devoted to the emancipation of slaves was established in Jonesboro, a city within East Tennessee.

²⁹Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 1-13.

³⁰*Ibid.* Many citizens felt that the construction of the railroad would help unite the people of the North and South. The two railroad companies eventually merged into one company in 1869.

Altogether, the economic opportunities that came from the railroad and wheat boom produced a new merchant and professional class. In addition, the railroad increased social and economic ties to distant markets and exposed the people of East Tennessee to the ideas and values of the plantation society. As the Civil War approached, an increasing number of individuals in East Tennessee aligned with the people of the Deep South and with Tennesseans who resided to the west. These social and political changes caused deep divisions in the region between citizens that supported secession and those who remained loyal to the Union.³¹

In November 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President of the United States. His election, and the failure of the Crittenden Compromise, prompted many southern states to secede from the Union and others to debate secession. In February 1861, secessionists in Tennessee were defeated when a special election was held to decide whether or not to hold a state convention to vote on secession. Less than 20 percent of voters in East Tennessee favored the convention.³²

On 15 April, two days after the Confederate attack at Fort Sumter, Lincoln called for troops to enter the southern states to suppress insurrection. The President's actions caused many who did not initially support secession to change their opinion on the matter. Secessionists took advantage of the change in opinion and moved quickly to gain

³¹Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 13-20.

³²*Ibid.*

support for their cause. Confederate sympathizers began forming military units within East Tennessee and began to recruit throughout the region.³³

In June, the people of Tennessee voted again to determine whether or not they would secede from the Union. As expected, Middle and West Tennessee voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession. But secessionists within East Tennessee were once again handed a significant defeat with only 30 percent of the 50,000 votes from the region in favor of secession. At the end of the day, however, the secessionists came to see their desires come true and Tennessee separate from the Union.³⁴

Organization and Operations Near Cumberland Gap

Tennessee's withdrawal from the Union brought about a new set of problems for the newest, and final state, to formally join the Confederacy. With the neutrality of Kentucky, Tennessee found itself positioned in the direct path of the Union Army. This was not lost upon the Confederate Government, which recognized the importance of East Tennessee and the need to protect the region's natural resources for Confederate military use.³⁵

³³Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 13-20, 68-70; Noel Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 60-80.

³⁴Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 36. Tennessee was the last state to secede from the Union.

³⁵The mountains of East Tennessee provided many natural resources that were valuable to the Confederate Army. Copper was necessary to produce percussion caps and salt peter was used to manufacture gunpowder. See *Army of the Heartland*, 6.

Sensing the looming threat to his state, Governor Isham Harris created three military departments to defend the three regions of Tennessee.³⁶ Harris appointed Felix K. Zollicoffer to the rank of brigadier general and ordered him to take charge of state military forces in East Tennessee. Although Zollicoffer had little military experience, he had previously served as a three-term United States Congressman, and Harris believed that his political skills would be useful in pacifying Unionists in the region.³⁷

As Harris organized the Provisional Army of Tennessee, citizens throughout the state formed units for the Confederate cause. During this time, two cavalry battalions organized that would later merge to form the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin M. Branner formed the Fourth (Branner's) Tennessee Cavalry Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel George R. McClellan formed the second unit, the Fifth (McClellan's) Tennessee Cavalry Battalion.³⁸ The men were mustered from counties in East Tennessee, and many remained with their companies throughout the war.³⁹

Although little is known about Lieutenant Colonel Branner, there are indicators that he, not surprisingly, strove to recruit quality soldiers into his organization. In late July, Branner recruited at a college in northeastern Tennessee and was able to muster

³⁶Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 76.

³⁷Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, 50.

³⁸Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27.

³⁹Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 38; The men who formed these units came from the following counties: Bledsoe, Bradley, Claiborne, Cumberland, Hancock, Hamilton, Hawkins, Jefferson, Knox, Monroe, Polk, Sequatchie, Sullivan, Union, and as far away as North Alabama. Regimental organization by county was normal for units from Tennessee.

over twenty young men into his cavalry unit.⁴⁰ According to a historian from East Tennessee, Branner's efforts to recruit educated soldiers paid off and contributed to the reputation of Branner's unit being comprised of "wealthy, educated young men of East Tennessee."⁴¹

More is known about Lieutenant Colonel McClellan. While barely a teenager, McClellan enlisted in the militia to aid in the removal of Cherokee Indians from their lands in East Tennessee. In 1847, he formed a volunteer company in Tennessee that participated in the Mexican-American War. McClellan rose to the rank of colonel, and commanded the Fifth Regiment of Tennessee Volunteers. In 1859, he was elected to serve as a state senator and filled the office until the beginning of the Civil War.⁴²

Branner and McClellan organized and trained their forces at Camp Cummings, just east of Knoxville. Named in honor of the commander of the Nineteenth Tennessee Infantry Regiment, Colonel David H. Cummings, the camp was where civilians learned how to be soldiers.⁴³ Men at Camp Cummings learned the basics of drill, how to perform guard duty, and were led to believe the enemy was approaching in order to test their

⁴⁰William D. Taylor and Darby O'N. Taylor, "Present-with Horse, Bridle and Saddle. The Boys of Mossy Creek Baptist College in the War between the States," *Carson Newman-Studies* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 96.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 97.

⁴²Oliver Taylor, *Historic Sullivan, A History of Sullivan County, Tennessee with Brief Biographies of the Makers of History* (Bristol, TN: The King Printing Company, 1909), 236-238.

⁴³Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 3-4; Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27; W. J. Worsham and C. W. Heiskell, *Old Nineteenth Tennessee Regiment, C.S.A. June, 1861-April 1865* (Knoxville, TN: Press of Paragon Print Co, 1902), 8.

response. Most Southern men who joined the cavalry were skilled riders but had to learn how to operate together as a cavalry unit. Although they received basic instruction, they were given little advanced training. Advanced cavalry skills were often learned on-the-job and during actual operations.⁴⁴

In addition to the men, horses had to be trained and prepared for cavalry use. Most of the animals were not familiar with the sound of weapons being discharged and had to adapt to the noise. Individual weapons training was limited due to a lack of weapons and ammunition. Whenever available, flintlock firearms were issued to soldiers, rather than percussion cap ignition systems, and many men simply used the weapons they had brought from home.⁴⁵

Throughout July and August, disaffection grew among Unionists in East Tennessee. Zollicoffer used his military forces to deal with rebellious Unionists which forced many of them to flee to Kentucky. In Kentucky, the displaced Unionists established military camps and, with the help of the Union Army, began organizing military units to fight against the Confederacy.⁴⁶

In late August, Zollicoffer began moving a portion of his forces north, including part of Branner's cavalry battalion, from Camp Cummings to Cumberland Gap. Over half

⁴⁴Ibid.; Katcher and Embleton, *Confederate Cavalryman*, 13-14; Schaefer, "The Tactical and Strategic Evolution," 28-55.

⁴⁵Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 8. The flintlocks would later prove to be a detriment to those who received them because the weapons malfunctioned when exposed to wet conditions.

⁴⁶Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 42-43; *OR*, series 1, vol. 4, 388, 393.

of his total command remained behind due to supply issues and a lack of weapons.⁴⁷

McClellan's cavalry battalion remained in Knoxville, serving as Zollicoffer's reserve.⁴⁸

In early September, Zollicoffer moved his command north from Cumberland Gap to a small settlement in Kentucky called Cumberland Ford.⁴⁹ Zollicoffer felt that he needed to move north in order to protect his area of responsibility from Federal forces organizing at Camp Dick Robinson and Camp Andrew Johnson.⁵⁰ His movement north occurred at approximately the same time that Major General Leonidas Polk moved forces into Columbus, Kentucky, which effectively pushed Kentucky into Union control.⁵¹

During the remainder of September, Zollicoffer used his cavalry to scout ahead of the main body and act as pickets. Branner's cavalry supported small engagements against Federal forces by securing the Confederate lines of communication during offensive operations. In early October, Zollicoffer received information indicating Federal forces were moving from Camp Dick Robinson toward Cumberland Gap and marched his

⁴⁷Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 87; William Preston Johnston, *The Life of General Albert Sydney Johnston, Embracing His Services in the Armies of the United States, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878), 315.

⁴⁸Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 13.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*OR*, series 1, vol. 4, 194-195. Camp Dick Robinson and Camp Andrew Johnson were located north of Zollicoffer's position at Cumberland Ford. Andrew Johnson was a senator from Tennessee who opposed secession and fled Tennessee at the outbreak of the war. He served as Abraham Lincoln's vice president and became President of the United States when Lincoln was assassinated.

⁵¹Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 87; *OR*, series 1, vol. 1, 190. Unbeknownst to the Confederate command in Richmond, Zollicoffer's plan to move into Kentucky had previously been approved by Johnston when he visited Zollicoffer in Knoxville just a few days prior to Zollicoffer's advance north. See Johnston, *The Life of*, 306.

troops north to meet the advancing threat. A portion of Branner's cavalry rode at the head of the column to screen Zollicoffer's movement. Further to the south, elements of Branner's battalion, which were part of the reserve force near Knoxville, moved west to Post Oak Springs, Tennessee, to monitor Federal activity near Albany, Kentucky.⁵²

On 18 October, Zollicoffer attacked Federal forces located at Rockcastle Hills. The Federal forces, under the command of Brigadier General George Thomas, defeated the attack. Zollicoffer retreated back to Cumberland Ford to prevent the Federals from attacking into East Tennessee. News of the Confederate defeat spread throughout East Tennessee and Unionists petitioned Thomas to invade the region, offering to burn the bridges along the railroad in his advance. Thus, Zollicoffer faced a conventional threat from his front and an irregular threat in his rear.⁵³

Concerned that Federal forces might attempt to enter East Tennessee along his western flank, Zollicoffer ordered several cavalry units to Jamestown, Tennessee, to watch for enemy movement. From his own location, he sent elements of Branner's command to Jamestown, and dispatched McClellan's cavalry battalion to the same location. In the final days of October, Branner's and McClellan's men scouted north of Jamestown and monitored Federal activity.⁵⁴ During this time, McClellan's men captured a "Lincoln emissary" who stated that Federal forces intended to attack south through

⁵²OR, series 1, vol. 4, 433-435, 447-448; Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27. Zollicoffer ordered "The senior captain of Branner's Battalion, with 220 men, will march toward Barbourville and London in advance of the corps of the brigade."

⁵³OR, series 1, vol. 4, 483-490, 529-530; Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27.

⁵⁴OR, series 1, vol. 4, 487-493.

Jamestown. Zollicoffer ordered his men to improve the defenses at Jamestown and prepare for the Federal advance.⁵⁵

On 4 November, McClellan sent Zollicoffer an urgent dispatch informing him that he had “entirely reliable” information that the enemy was approaching toward Jamestown from Monticello, Kentucky. Efforts were rapidly made to improve the defenses of Jamestown as McClellan’s roughly 500 cavalry troops prepared to encounter 6,000 approaching Federal soldiers.⁵⁶ Although he suspected that the movement was a feint, Zollicoffer decided to move his forces southwest to meet the attack and conducted a seventy-one mile march from Cumberland Ford to the Jamestown area. On 8 November, as he moved toward Jamestown, Zollicoffer received a message from McClellan informing him that the first report was “founded in error”.⁵⁷

In reality, the Federal force turned out to be composed of 1,200 cavalry that reconnoitered south toward Monticello and, finding no Rebels, returned back to their camp. Best put by one observer: “It appears that Madam Rumor had swelled four hundred to 6,000 before she delivered her entirely reliable report to Lieutenant Colonel McClellan.” Although McClellan promptly moved to confirm the validity of the initial report, and attempted to correct the error, communication issues prevented him from notifying Zollicoffer before he moved his command to Jamestown.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid., 490-491; R. R. Hancock, *Hancock's Diary: Or, A History of the Second Tennessee Confederate Cavalry* (Nashville, TN: Brandon Print Co, 1887), 71.

⁵⁶OR, series 1, vol. 4, 514-522. These numbers are taken directly from McClellan’s report to Zollicoffer.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 73.

Lieutenant Colonel McClellan failed to confirm the intelligence he received from his soldiers before reporting it to Zollicoffer. Unquestionably, one of Zollicoffer's critical information requirements was to know where Federal forces would advance along his defensive line. By providing his commander with erroneous information, McClellan's report influenced Zollicoffer's decision to shift west.⁵⁹

McClellan's report to Zollicoffer also seems to have had an unforeseen negative effect. On the same day that McClellan sent his dispatch to Zollicoffer, Colonel W.B. Wood, commanding Confederate forces at Knoxville, informed Richmond that the news of a Federal invasion "had been received by the Union men in East Tennessee, and they are openly preparing for rebellion." Four days later, Unionists attacked several bridges along the two railroads in East Tennessee anticipating that Federal forces would advance south and attack into the region. McClellan's report may have been the catalyst that generated the rise of a fifth column within East Tennessee that the Confederates would struggle to control during the remainder of the war.⁶⁰

By 15 November, Zollicoffer had quickly dealt with the railroad bridge burners and suppressed the remaining rebellious Unionists operating in the rear of his area of

⁵⁹Although McClellan's report prompted Zollicoffer to move southwest from near Cumberland Gap, author Kenneth Hafendorfer indicates, in *Mill Springs: Campaign and Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky*, Zollicoffer already planned to move from Cumberland Gap toward Jamestown. At worst, McClellan's report only hastened Zollicoffer's move.

⁶⁰OR, series 1, vol. 4, 230-232, 530-531. Several months prior to this incident, a prominent Unionist leader from East Tennessee traveled to Washington and proposed the bridge burning idea to both President Lincoln and Major General George B. McClellan. They agreed to support the plan but the Federal commander in Kentucky, Brigadier General William Tecumseh Sherman, abandoned the plan at the last minute, unbeknownst to the bridge burners.

operations.⁶¹ McClellan's and Branner's battalions continued screening and picketing in and around Jamestown and the passes near Jacksboro.⁶² Now that East Tennessee was secure, and the passes along the Tennessee and Kentucky borders were defended, Zollicoffer could once again turn his attention to the threat to his north.

Mill Springs

In late November, General Albert Sidney Johnston ordered Zollicoffer to move north in order to better defend against any attempt by Federal forces to invade Tennessee. Zollicoffer decided that Mill Springs, Kentucky, was the best place to establish his winter quarters because he could receive supplies from Nashville by boat and forage off the land.⁶³ Therefore, on 21 November, he dispatched several units, including McClellan's cavalry, north toward Mill Springs. Their mission was to capture ferry boats between Burkesville and Mill Springs in order to control the Cumberland River crossings. But their efforts failed, as Federal forces sunk the boats in order to prevent them from falling into Confederate hands.⁶⁴

Zollicoffer moved the remainder of his command to Mill Springs and found it to be a well supplied position. Brigadier General Albin Schoepf, commanding Union forces

⁶¹Ibid., 554.

⁶²Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27; *OR*, series 1, vol. 4, 244.

⁶³Colonel (Ret.) Armando Alfaro, "The Paper Trail of the Civil War in Kentucky 1861-1865," www.kygrro.org (accessed 12 May 2014); Johnston, *The Life of*, 395; *OR*, series 1, vol. 7, 686-687.

⁶⁴Kenneth Hafendorfer, *Mill Springs: Campaign and Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky* (Louisville, KY: KH Press, 2001), 63-64; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 82-87.

outside of Somerset, ordered portions of his force south toward Mill Springs in order to disrupt Zollicoffer's movements if he attempted to cross the Cumberland River.

Schoepf's forces skirmished with the Confederates, over the course of the next two weeks, both east and west of Mill Springs.⁶⁵

On 9 December, Zollicoffer began building ferry boats for the purpose of crossing over the Cumberland River. Exactly why he decided to cross remains a great mystery, but Zollicoffer may have done so because he found the north bank "naturally strong" and felt that he needed to deal with Federal forces that were skirmishing with his units. That same day, both McClellan's and Branner's units crossed the Cumberland River and arrived at Beech Grove, Kentucky.⁶⁶

In the following weeks, Zollicoffer's men fortified their position at Beech Grove. Casualties mounted due to illness and from personnel drowning as they attempted to cross back and forth across the swollen river.⁶⁷ As the weeks proceeded, McClellan's and Branner's units scouted along the river and forced Schoepf to abandon his forward defensive positions.⁶⁸

On 26 December, Zollicoffer dispatched three cavalry battalions west from Beech Grove in order to divert attention away from a steamship bringing supplies to his camp.

The detachment consisted of Branner's, McClellan's, and Lieutenant Colonel Frank

⁶⁵OR, series 1, vol. 7, 7-8.

⁶⁶Ibid., 10; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 90. McClellan's unit was the first to cross over the Cumberland River to Beech Grove. He established a picket line, enabling the rest of Zollicoffer's force to cross the river. See Hafendorfer, *Mill Springs*, 85.

⁶⁷Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 6.

⁶⁸Hafendorfer, *Mill Springs*, 89-91.

McNairy's cavalry battalions. According to one eyewitness, as McNairy approached Jamestown, Kentucky, his battalion was forced to halt in order "to hurry up Branner and McClellan, who in the meantime had dropped somewhat behind." The column then proceeded forward and made contact with the enemy. McNairy ordered one of the battalions to attack from the north while his battalion, and the remaining unit, attacked from the east. The battalion that moved to the north reported to McNairy that Jamestown could not be approached and the Confederates withdrew as night fell.⁶⁹

This evidence indicates that both Branner's and McClellan's battalions fell behind during the movement to Jamestown and one failed to execute the flanking movement directed by the officer commanding the operation. Ultimately, both Branner and McClellan may have been a hindrance to the operation. However, more evidence is needed to determine whether or not the delay, and failed flanking movement, was due to errors that the commanders made or if their actions were justified.

Author Kenneth Hafendorfer, in his book *Mill Springs: Campaign and Battle of Mill Spring, Kentucky*, states that both McClellan's and Branner's units did manage to successfully escort the steamship to Mill Springs following the failed engagement at Jamestown. More importantly, Hafendorfer points out that a member of McClellan's unit, Captain C. C. Spiller, had to pilot the boat after three failed attempts to move it to Mill Springs. According to Hafendorfer, Spiller was a respected riverboat pilot who, prior to the war, owned and operated boats along the Tennessee River.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 101-102. The witness does not designate whether it was Branner or McClellan that conducted the flanking movement at Jamestown.

⁷⁰Hafendorfer, *Mill Springs*, 129.

On 2 January, Major General George B. Crittenden arrived at Beech Grove and assumed command of Confederate forces there. On the evening of 18 January, Crittenden advanced his army from Beech Grove toward the Federal troops that were concentrated north of his position. Zollicoffer's brigade led the advancing column and Brigadier General William Carroll commanded the reserve force that followed. Both Branner's and McClellan's cavalry battalions were part of Carroll's force and marched on the flanks and rear of his column.⁷¹

Near dawn, on 19 January, the lead elements of the Confederate force made contact with the Union Army and the Battle of Mills Springs began. Plagued with weapons that were rendered useless by the sleet and rain, the Confederates struggled to sustain an effective attack against the Federal defense. Zollicoffer lost his way in the confusion of the battle, accidentally rode past his front lines, and was killed by Federal troops. News of his death spread throughout the already demoralized Confederate ranks and units began retreating from the field.⁷²

Carroll had formed his forces behind the cover of a ridge on the battlefield and began moving his troops forward to mitigate the effects of the retreating units. But his

⁷¹Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 96-97; *OR*, series 1, vol. 7, 107; Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 20; Hafendorfer, *Mill Springs*, 175-178. Crittenden went to Beech Grove in order to determine the vulnerability of Zollicoffer's position on the north bank of the Cumberland River. He was shocked to find that both Thomas and Shoenpf had concentrated their forces to the north of Zollicoffer's position and decided to attack the Federals before they could strike the Confederate force.

⁷²Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 20-24; Eastham Tarrant, *The Wild Riders of the First Kentucky Cavalry. A History of the Regiment, in the Great War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Lexington, KY: R. H. Carothers, 1900), 63. Many of the flintlock weapons were rendered inoperable by the rain. One eyewitness stated that he saw several angry men break their weapons over a fence after many unsuccessful attempts to fire their weapons.

efforts came too late, and the momentum of the battle shifted toward the Federal forces, who moved swiftly to flank and destroy the Confederate Army. The Confederates were now routed, and hurried to leave the battlefield, leaving the wounded and dying behind. Branner's and McClellan's men covered their retreat.⁷³

As the Confederates retreated to Beech Grove, Thomas pursued. Sensing the potential destruction of his entire command, Crittenden ordered his men to cross the Cumberland River and retreat to Mill Springs. Fortunately, a single steamship was on hand to facilitate the retreat across the river. Crittenden's after action report indicates that Spiller piloted the boat back and forth across the river, while under fire from Union cannons, to facilitate the movement of the fleeing force.⁷⁴

The retreat of Crittenden's force was successful. But the success was limited to the retreat of the men and the men alone. Although attempts were made to drive the horses into the river, and swim them across, most of the animals were left behind. From Mill Springs, Crittenden's force continued south until they arrived at the outskirts of

⁷³Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 23-24; In his after action report, BG Carroll noted that he did not have an opportunity to bring his cavalry and artillery forward due to the "rugged and uneven nature of the ground over which the battle was fought."

⁷⁴*OR*, series 1, vol. 7, 110. In his after action report, Crittenden stated "Much is due to the energy, skill, and courage of Captain Spiller, of the cavalry, who commanded the boat."

Monticello, Kentucky. In the days following, Crittenden moved his force southwest through Kentucky until it finally arrived at the outskirts of Gainesboro, Tennessee.⁷⁵

Kirby Smith Takes Command

On 8 March 1862, Major General Edmund Kirby Smith took command of the Department of East Tennessee. Before him lay the great task of securing an area of operations that ran from Chattanooga in the south all the way to Cumberland Gap in the north. This had to be accomplished with a force of approximately nine thousand soldiers and in a territory with sharply divided loyalties. To the west, Smith faced the threat of invasion by Federal forces located in Nashville under the command of Major General Don Carlos Buell. In the north, Brigadier General James A. Garfield was located near Pound Gap and Brigadier General George W. Morgan was organizing a division near Barboursville.⁷⁶

To counter these threats, Smith arrayed his forces in a line extending northeast from Chattanooga to Cumberland Gap. Branner's and McClellan's men were located at key points along this line during March and April 1862. In the south, soldiers from both

⁷⁵Worham and Hieskell, *Old Nineteenth*, 27-28; *OR*, series 1, vol. 7, 862-863; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 11. By 6 February, Crittenden finally settled in a location known as Chestnut Mound, just east of Carthage, Tennessee. Two day's later, Richmond decided to form a new department in East Tennessee. Branner's and McClellan's units left Crittenden's command and went back home to East Tennessee.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*; John R. McBride, *History of the Thirty-Third Indiana Veteran Volunteer Infantry During the Four Years of Civil War, from Sept. 16, 1861, to July 21, 1865; And Incidentally of Col. John Coburn's Second Brigade, Third Division, Twentieth Army Corps, Including Incidents of the Great Rebellion* (Indianapolis, IN: W. B. Burford, Printer, 1900), 35-36; Mark Swanson and Jacqueline D. Langley, *Atlas of the Civil War, Month by Month: Major Battles and Troop Movements* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 36; Joseph Howard Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A.* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 157.

battalions were positioned near Chattanooga and Cleveland, Tennessee, in support of Brigadier General Samuel B. Maxey. In the center, both battalions had men near Kingston, with portions of Brigadier General Danville Leadbetter's infantry brigade. In the north, a portion of McClellan's force was situated near Clinton, while Branner had men stationed at Knoxville. Colonel James Rains was positioned at Cumberland Gap with 4,000 infantry.⁷⁷

In April, two events took place which set the stage for an incident that propelled one member of Branner's organization, Captain Henry Marshall Ashby, to a favorable status with Smith. On the sixteenth, the Confederate government issued conscription orders for all men aged 18-35 to serve a three year term in the Confederate army. This angered many Unionists. Several decided to flee and vowed to return as members of the Federal army.⁷⁸

That same day, a detachment consisting of parts of Branner's and McClellan's units, under Ashby's command, intercepted a large body of what were described as "Union men of East Tennessee" fleeing toward Kentucky through Woodson's Gap. Conflict erupted as Ashby's men moved to stop the column, likely attempting to escape the mandatory conscription act. Their actions resulted in the Confederates killing about 30, wounding approximately the same number, and capturing 423 prisoners who were later transported to Georgia. Ashby noted, in his after action report, that his detachment

⁷⁷Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 25-27; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 188; Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith*, 161-165. General Robert E. Lee informed Smith that his primary duty was to protect the railroad line than ran through East Tennessee because it served as the primary line of communication between Richmond and the Deep South.

⁷⁸Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 86-95; McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels*, 122.

of approximately 120 men fought for an hour before the Unionists surrendered. The engagement resulted in five members of Ashby's detachment being seriously wounded.⁷⁹

At the outbreak of the war, Henry Marshall Ashby was a guest at his uncle's home in Knoxville when he decided to help raise a company of cavalry from Knox County, Tennessee, and was subsequently elected to serve as its captain. Little is known about Ashby's past, except that he was born in Virginia and attended William and Mary College from 1853-1854 before eventually moving to Chattanooga. A penchant for cavalry operations seems to have run in the family, considering that Ashby was the first cousin of Turner Ashby who commanded cavalry for Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.⁸⁰

Ashby's actions at Woodson's Gap demonstrated to Smith that the soldiers in his command had potential, and more importantly, elevated Ashby's status. On 27 April, Smith forwarded Ashby's report to Confederate leaders and wrote: "The energy and gallantry evinced on this occasion by Captain Ashby is consistent with his whole military career. He is commended to the notice of the Department as an efficient cavalry officer, worthy of advancement."⁸¹ Although, this incident quickly propelled Ashby to greater rank and responsibility, it would come back to haunt him after the war.

⁷⁹OR, series 1, vol. 10, part 1, 649-650; Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith*, 171-172.

⁸⁰Coffin, "COL. Henry M. Ashby," 22-23.

⁸¹Ibid.

During this time, Colonel Benjamin Allston was ordered from Virginia to East Tennessee, to assume command of a cavalry brigade in Smith's department.⁸² Branner's and McClellan's battalions were assigned to Allston's new brigade. According to the Department of East Tennessee's return, the brigade was made up of 1,136 soldiers who were "partly and badly armed with shot-guns." Over the course of the preceding weeks, Smith received intelligence indicating that Brigadier General George W. Morgan's force of Federals was concentrating at Cumberland Ford and preparing to attack Cumberland Gap. Additionally, Brigadier General Ormsby Mitchel's Federal forces now threatened Chattanooga. Smith directed Allston to send elements of his brigade to Jacksborough, to strengthen the Confederate line in the north, and leave a portion of his cavalry in Kingston to monitor Federal activity near Chattanooga.⁸³

On 24 May, a major reorganization took place which had a significant impact on Branner's and McClellan's cavalry battalions and Ashby. On this date both battalions were combined to form the First Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. The new regiment was assigned to Allston's First Cavalry Brigade within Smith's Department of East Tennessee. Neither Branner nor McClellan were selected to command the new regiment. Instead, the honor went to newly promoted Colonel Ashby who, just over a month earlier, had captured the Union men at Woodson's Gap and earned praise from Smith. By the end of 1862, the First Tennessee Cavalry Regiment came to be known as the Second

⁸²William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Allstons of Chicora Wood Wealth, Honor, and Gentility in the South Carolina Lowcountry* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 133.

⁸³*OR*, series 1, vol. 10, part 1, 75-77; *OR*, series 1, vol. 10, part 2, 476; Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith*, 175-181; Swanson and Langley, *Atlas*, 38-41.

Tennessee Cavalry Regiment and retained that name throughout the remainder of the war.⁸⁴

In early June, Mitchel's forces bombarded Chattanooga. Simultaneously, Morgan moved his men into Tennessee from Kentucky to seize Cumberland Gap. As Morgan's men crossed over the Cumberland Mountains, and into Powell's Valley, Ashby's regiment skirmished with the Federals. Morgan then moved his force east from Powell's Valley toward Cumberland Gap. Ashby's regiment then moved to Maynardville in order to observe Morgan's movement and the crossings of the Clinch River.⁸⁵

As Morgan approached Cumberland Gap, Smith ordered Brigadier General Carter L. Stevenson, the commander of Confederate forces at Cumberland Gap, to abandon the location and establish a new defensive position to the south.⁸⁶ Allston's cavalry, with Ashby's regiment, covered Stevenson's movement to his new position.⁸⁷ By 18 June, Morgan had successfully captured Cumberland Gap and displaced all Confederate forces out of the mountains north of Powell's River. Allston's cavalry continued to cover the roads leading toward Maynardville and south from Powell's Valley. Throughout the

⁸⁴Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 52-54; No known evidence exists indicating Branner's and McClellan's reaction to Ashby's promotion. In addition, records do not indicate why the First Tennessee Cavalry Regiment came to be known as the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. It appears that the unit's designation was changed around the time Smith's command moved to join Bragg's Army at Stones River.

⁸⁵Swanson and Langley, *Atlas*, 42-43; *OR*, series 1, vol. 10, part 1, 53-54, 77; *OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 2, 677-681.

⁸⁶Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 190.

⁸⁷*OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 2, 686.

remainder of June, and the month of July, Ashby's regiment continued to scout and skirmish along the ridges and valleys near the Clinch and Powell Rivers.⁸⁸

The Kentucky Campaign

In the meantime, Smith had been developing a plan to invade Kentucky. Smith's intent was to leave Stevenson's force just south of Cumberland Gap to hold Morgan in place, while he took the remainder of his command to Barboursville, Kentucky, via the mountain passes west of Morgan's position. On 14 August, Smith's forces began moving north from Knoxville. As Stevenson advanced north from Tazewell to demonstrate against Morgan, Ashby's men moved into position at Roger's Gap and provided a screen for Smith's movement north.⁸⁹

After Smith passed through the gap, Ashby's men moved northeast toward Cumberland Ford, placing themselves immediately behind Morgan's Federal forces at Cumberland Gap. On 17 August, Ashby's men, reported as six hundred strong, defeated a Federal force located at Cumberland Ford.⁹⁰ By capturing Cumberland Ford, Ashby

⁸⁸Ibid., 691; James Jones, "Civil War Timeline 1862," Tennessee State Library and Archives, https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/educationoutreach/Civil%20War%20Resources/Timelines/1862%20Timeline.pdf&sa=U&ei=ymOLU-u4L8iPyATp6oLAAG&ved=0CAgQFjAD&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNFp9yMdAD1MmtWYm_hamoaLxBTjxQ (accessed 12 May 2014), 13.

⁸⁹Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 209-212.

⁹⁰Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 52-54. Federal reports indicate they lost sixty men in the engagement.

severed Morgan's lines of communication.⁹¹ One soldier in Morgan's command noted "the fact now dawned upon our army that it was surrounded; and on the 17th day of August an order was read placing the men on half rations of everything except beans and rice."⁹²

Smith continued to move deeper into Kentucky.⁹³ Understanding that Morgan still threatened East Tennessee, Smith left Stevenson south of Cumberland Gap in order to contain Morgan's force. As Smith continued operations in Kentucky, Ashby's regiment, and Allston's brigade, operated along the Cumberland Mountains in support of Stevenson. On 29 August, a company of Ashby's men, stationed at Roger's Gap, were surprised by a Federal force and suffered a significant loss of six killed, several wounded, and nineteen soldiers taken prisoner, to include the company commander, Captain Clark Rhodes.⁹⁴ This was likely the same unit which, two weeks prior, secured and guarded Roger's Gap in order to facilitate Smith's movement into Kentucky.⁹⁵

⁹¹Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 30; Kenneth A. Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens: The Confederate Cavalry in the Kentucky Campaign of 1862* (Louisville, KY: KH Press, 1995), 106.

⁹²McBride, *History of the Thirty-Third*, 49; W. R. Carter, *History of the First Regiment of Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry in the Great War of the Rebellion, With the Armies of the Ohio and Cumberland, Under Generals Morgan, Rosecrans, Thomas, Stanley and Wilson. 1862-1865* (Knoxville, TN: Gaut-Ogden Co., 1902), 41; Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 189.

⁹³James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 517.

⁹⁴Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 52-54.

⁹⁵Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 189, 211-212. On 4 September, Smith occupied Lexington and waited for Bragg to move north from Tennessee.

As Bragg moved north from Chattanooga into Kentucky to meet Smith, Morgan was steadily running out of supplies at Cumberland Gap. Efforts were made to provide relief, but Federal forces were unable to reach Morgan. Foraging was difficult for Federal troops, as Confederate forces remained close by. On 16 September, Morgan decided to evacuate Cumberland Gap and Stevenson subsequently took control of the position.⁹⁶

On 24 September, Smith ordered Stevenson to “push on with all possible speed” toward Lexington, Kentucky. Allston moved his brigade with Stevenson’s division in the push north. On 30 September, the bulk of Stevenson’s force halted at Danville, Kentucky, while Allston continued north to join Smith.⁹⁷ On 4 October, both Smith and Bragg were in Frankfort and participated in the installation of a new Confederate state government. Ashby’s men were on hand for the ceremony. The ceremony was quickly interrupted though, by the sound of explosions to the west as Federal forces under Brigadier General Joshua Sill, part of Major General Don Carlos Buell’s Army of the Ohio, advanced toward Frankfort from the west.⁹⁸

Bragg decided to concentrate his forces south at Harrodsburg and ordered Smith to move to that location.⁹⁹ Smith directed Allston to cover Major General Patrick

⁹⁶Carter, *History of the First Regiment*, 41-47; McBride, *History of the Thirty-Third*, 49-52.

⁹⁷Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 31; Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 442, 555.

⁹⁸Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, 177-178; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 31; Robert S. Cameron, *Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Perryville, 8 October 1862* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2005), 94-95. Unbeknownst to the Confederate leadership, Sill’s movement was a feint aimed at concealing Buell’s movement to the south, away from Louisville.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

Cleburne's move to the south and the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment conducted the operation.¹⁰⁰ The rest of Smith's command moved toward Versailles. Over the course of the next few days, the Second Tennessee Cavalry operated west of the Kentucky River, near Lawrenceburg and Salvisa, and watched over the flank of Smith's command.¹⁰¹

On 7 October, Bragg decided to shift his forces north, in order to join Smith at Versailles, after Smith reported that a large Federal force was approaching Frankfort. As Bragg's forces maneuvered north from Harrodsburg, Smith directed Allston to perform reconnaissance and "push your pickets far enough out to the front to find out where the enemy is."¹⁰² That afternoon, Allston's men came into contact with three Federal columns, and reported that they appeared to be marching toward Lawrenceburg and Frankfort. This, coupled with Smith's repeated pleas for assistance, reinforced Bragg's belief that the Federal Army was moving toward Frankfort. In reality though, Buell was moving south to Perryville.¹⁰³ That evening, Ashby's men skirmished with Sill's division outside of Lawrenceburg.¹⁰⁴

On 8 October, the Battle of Perryville took place. Ashby's men were posted north of Perryville, with the rest of Allston's brigade, and did not participate in the

¹⁰⁰Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 31; *OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 2, 914-915; Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 659.

¹⁰¹Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 665-667.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 692.

¹⁰³Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 257-258; Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 130.

¹⁰⁴Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 31-32; Noe, *Perryville*, 132-133.

engagement.¹⁰⁵ However, their position placed them between Perryville and Sill's division, which was proceeding south from Frankfort to join the rest of Buell's army.

At close to nine o' clock in the morning, Allston's men spotted Sill's advancing division and formed a line of battle just south of Lawrenceburg. Federal artillery began to fire on the cavalry and Allston responded by ordering his men to retreat away from the advancing Federals. Shortly after breaking contact though, Allston decided to ambush his pursuers. His plan worked, and Federal cavalry entered the trap. Henry Davidson, a Federal soldier describing the scene, stated that the Rebels "put spurs to their horses and flew down to the ravine, and then in squads up a long hill sloping towards us, in full view."¹⁰⁶

Hand-to-hand conflict ensued as the Confederate cavalry pressed the attack, with Davidson noting that "the charge of the rebel cavalry, with their bright colors flying, was fierce and exciting."¹⁰⁷ Despite the success of the attack, the engagement came at a high cost for the commander of the mounted soldiers. At some point during the fight, Allston was severely wounded and likely evacuated for medical care. Ashby assumed command

¹⁰⁵Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 32.

¹⁰⁶Henry M. Davidson, *History of Battery A, First Regiment of Ohio Vol. Light Artillery* (Milwaukee, WI: Daily Wisconsin Steam Printing House, 1865), 45-47; Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 706-710.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

of the brigade and that evening dispatched men to monitor the movements of Sill's column.¹⁰⁸

On 9 October, Smith's Confederate forces began moving toward Harrodsburg from Lawrenceburg with Ashby's brigade covering their withdrawal and skirmishing with Sill's men.¹⁰⁹ During the retreat, Ashby's men conducted an attack on one of Sill's small wagon trains but was unable to halt their target. The train eventually stopped when it encountered a large body of Confederate infantry and promptly surrendered. In *They Died By Twos and Tens, The Confederate Cavalry in the Kentucky Campaign of 1862*, Kenneth Hafendorfer argues that Ashby's attack was so pitiful that the Federals all but ignored the advance. The attack likely failed due to poor execution and a lack of adequate firepower.¹¹⁰

On 10 October, Bragg ordered his men to withdraw from Kentucky.¹¹¹ As the army retreated south toward Cumberland Gap, Ashby's men operated alongside Colonel John Hunt Morgan's cavalry and assisted Colonel Joseph Wheeler in covering the

¹⁰⁸Scarborough, *The Allstons*, 146; Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 706-710. Evidence does not indicate when, exactly, Ashby took command of Allston's brigade. However, it is likely that he assumed command shortly after Allston was wounded.

¹⁰⁹Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 32.

¹¹⁰Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 742-743. The failed attack on the wagon train was conducted by the Third Tennessee Cavalry Regiment and Ashby's First Tennessee Cavalry Regiment.

¹¹¹Shelby Foote, *The Civil War, a Narrative: Fort Sumter to Perryville* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 739.

retreat.¹¹² Overall, the cavalry were successful at protecting the rear of Bragg's and Smith's Armies. In *The Civil War: A Narrative* author Shelby Foote notes that "[Wheeler's] horsemen fought no less than twenty-six engagements during the first five days and nights of the retreat beating off Federal attempts to hack at the long, slow moving line of wagons"¹¹³ On 22 October, Smith's weary men passed through Cumberland Gap and Ashby's men scoured the country in search of food for Smith's forces. As Smith's army moved back to Knoxville to reorganize and recover from the long campaign, Ashby's men remained behind at Flat Lick, Kentucky, and guarded the northern entrances to Tennessee.¹¹⁴

By the end of the month, the Second Tennessee Cavalry was assigned to a new cavalry brigade under the command of Brigadier General John Pegram because Allston was still recovering from his wounds and unable to return to duty.¹¹⁵ During the Kentucky campaign Pegram had served as Smith's chief of staff. Prior to that, Pegram commanded briefly in Virginia, and was the first former United States Army officer to be

¹¹²Basil Wilson Duke, *Morgan's Cavalry* (New York and Washington: Neale Pub. Co, 1906), 195; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 34-35; *OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 2, 936-944, 959; *OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 1, 898.

¹¹³Foote, *Fort Sumter to Perryville*, 740.

¹¹⁴*OR*, series 1, vol. 16, part 2, 975.

¹¹⁵Scarborough, *The Allstons*, 146. Allston returned to active duty in March 1863 and served on Smith's staff through the duration of the war. Scarborough indicates that Allston never again performed field duty.

captured in the war when he surrendered his regiment to Federal forces at the Battle of Rich Mountain.¹¹⁶

There is no evidence outlining why Smith reorganized his cavalry into one brigade. However, author Kenneth Harfendorfer indicates in *They Died By Twos and Tens, The Confederate Cavalry in the Kentucky Campaign of 1862* that, while conducting operations in Kentucky, Smith came to understand the value of having a single commander to oversee the cavalry operations within his department. Additionally, the reorganization may have been necessary as Smith prepared for future operations in Middle Tennessee.¹¹⁷

Battle of Stones River

Following the Kentucky campaign, Bragg turned his attention to Federal forces at Nashville, now under the command of Major General William S. Rosecrans. Bragg moved his command to Murfreesboro from East Tennessee in order to prevent the Federals from penetrating deeper into Confederate territory. In November, Bragg reorganized his force and formed the Army of Tennessee. He officially absorbed Smith's army into his own and Smith proceeded to Murfreesboro from Knoxville. By late November, Smith's forces had arrived in Murfreesboro and been integrated into Bragg's

¹¹⁶Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 52-54; Edwin Bearss, *The Rebels Concentrate at Stones River* (Stones River National Military Park, March 1960), 26; Scott Laidig, "Brigadier General John Pegram, LEE'S Paradoxical Cavalier," eHistory Archive, <http://ehistory.osu.edu/uscw/library/essays/paradoxicalcavalier.cfm>. (accessed 12 May 2014).

¹¹⁷Hafendorfer, *They Died by Twos and Tens*, 692-693.

newly formed Army. Pegram's cavalry brigade relieved Brigadier General Morgan of his position, who then proceeded north to raid along the Federal lines of communication.¹¹⁸

At some point during this transition, Ashby's regiment was transferred from Pegram's brigade into Brigadier General John Wharton's brigade. Organization records show that Ashby's men were part of Wharton's brigade no later than 26 December, although they were probably with Wharton before then. Bragg aligned his cavalry forces to his front with Wharton screening the left, Wheeler the center, and Pegram on the right. In early December, the cavalry's main focus was screening, but they also launched attacks on Union foraging parties that wandered south of Nashville.¹¹⁹

On Christmas Day, Wharton's men were posted outside of Nolensville and continued watching for enemy movement.¹²⁰ The following day, Rosecrans moved his army out of Nashville toward Bragg's position. Over the course of the next several days, Wharton's cavalry fought a series of delaying actions, which slowed the Federal advance,

¹¹⁸Bearss, *The Rebels Concentrate*, 48; Foote, *Fort Sumter to Perryville*, 773-774; Matt Spruill and Lee Spruill, *Winter Lightning: A Guide to the Battle of Stones River* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 1; Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee, *Tennesseans*, 52-54. Bragg formed the Army of Tennessee on 20 November. On that same date, Ashby's command was operating near Cumberland Gap, guarding the entrances to the Great Valley of East Tennessee.

¹¹⁹Bearss, *The Rebels Concentrate*, 28, 40-42.

¹²⁰Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 47.

and gave Bragg time to prepare for the upcoming fight. On the evening of 30 December, Wharton's cavalry was positioned on the extreme left of the Confederate line.¹²¹

On 31 December, the Battle of Stones River began as Bragg went on the offensive against Rosecrans's army. Bragg's left wing surged forward and smashed into the Federal right. Rosecrans's right flank collapsed under the weight of the assault and began swiftly retreating from the oncoming Confederate advance. The success of the Confederate attack took many by surprise, including Wharton, who initially had trouble executing the task of getting his men around the flank of the collapsing Federal line.¹²²

As Wharton's brigade raced to attack the retreating Federals, his lead elements came in contact with Colonel Lewis Zahm's Federal cavalry brigade and forced the Federals to retreat. Wharton's cavalry pressed the attack and struck at Brigadier General Richard Johnson's retreating division, capturing the entire 75th Illinois Regiment and securing 1,500 prisoners and their guns. Wharton's cavalymen were unchecked and, seemingly, free to maneuver as they pleased.¹²³

As Wharton's men gathered prisoners, their attention quickly turned to a new, and more promising opportunity. Before them passed seventy-six supply wagons, loaded with a variety of items ranging from personal baggage to ammunition, hastily retreating along

¹²¹Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 47-60. Wharton's men established skirmish lines and waited for the Federal infantry units to approach. After they deployed, Wharton's men retreated to a new delaying position and repeated the process. Wharton's force conducted these delaying actions from 26 December until the evening before the Battle of Stone's River.

¹²²Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 12-16; *OR*, series 1, vol. 20, part 1, 966.

¹²³Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 104-107; *OR*, series 1, vol. 20, part 1, 773-774.

the Nashville Pike. Zahm managed to maneuver his cavalry in between the wagons, though, and Wharton's brigade. Wharton responded by employing his artillery against Zahm's cavalry. The fire had the intended effect and many of Zahm's men "fled like sheep."¹²⁴

Simultaneously, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, which had been acting as Wharton's reserve, came forward and maneuvered into a line of battle. An escort company joined Ashby's troops and Colonel Thomas Harrison's Texas Rangers lined up beside Ashby's force. Following the artillery engagement, Ashby's regiment charged. The remaining portion of Zahm's command countercharged, with sabers drawn, and fought with Ashby's men in close quarters combat. Wharton saw Ashby's men were "hard pressed" and sent in Harrison's Rangers to relieve Ashby. Harrison's men succeeded in driving off the Federal cavalry.¹²⁵

For a moment, Wharton's men had control of the field. They moved quickly to attack the remaining cavalry guarding the wagon train. As one Federal officer described the cavalry charge, "his [Wharton's] command charged down upon us like a tempest, his troopers yelling like a lot of devils."¹²⁶ The rest of the scene is best described by Wharton, who wrote afterward that "after a short hand-to hand conflict, in which the revolver was used with deadly effect, the enemy fled from the field in the wildest

¹²⁴Ibid., 966-970.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 104-107; Larry J. Daniel, *Battle of Stones River The Forgotten Conflict between the Confederate Army of Tennessee and the Union Army of the Cumberland* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 97-101; Gilbert C. Kniffin, *The Third Day at Stone's River* (Washington, DC: Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1907), 6.

confusion and dismay.”¹²⁷ The last of the cavalry guarding the trains was routed and Wharton’s men moved to seize the wagons.

Federal teamsters attempted to maneuver away but were quickly overtaken. Wharton’s men took control of the wagon train and prepared to lead it back to the rear of the Confederate lines. However, efforts had been made by Federal officers to assemble a hasty cavalry element to retake the wagons. Federal cavalry forces then conducted a surprise counterattack. Wharton’s men drove the Federals off, but eventually were compelled to withdraw. In the end, Wharton was able to report that he had captured a portion of the wagon train, several pieces of artillery, four hundred prisoners, and some livestock for the Confederate Army.¹²⁸

Early the following morning, Wharton ordered Ashby’s men to report back to Pegram’s command, thus ending their association with Wharton’s brigade. The following day, Bragg decided to attack Rosecrans’s left. Both Pegram’s and Wharton’s brigades were located on the right flank of Bragg’s Army in order to support the attack.¹²⁹

For reasons not fully understood, neither Wharton nor Pegram moved forward with Major General John C. Breckinridge when he attacked. Ashby’s men were fortunate that their organization did not advance with Breckenridge’s force, which was crushed by Federal artillery. One of Breckenridge’s troops later said of the Union artillery “the heavens opened and the stars of destruction were sweeping everything from the face of

¹²⁷*OR*, series 1, vol. 20, part 1, 967.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 637; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 14-15.

¹²⁹Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 64; Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 177, 195-196; Coffin, “COL. Henry M. Ashby,” 121; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 45.

the earth.”¹³⁰ Although Wharton and Pegram’s brigades did not participate in Breckinridge’s assault, they did subsequently play an important role in covering the withdrawal of his forces, and likely prevented the Federals from turning the Confederate right following the engagement.¹³¹

Analysis

Several patterns emerge by reviewing the operations of the Second Tennessee Cavalry from the unit’s inception to the Battle of Stones River. First, the regiment performed well at protecting maneuvering units and delaying enemy advances. During offensive operations, the Second Tennessee Cavalry effectively screened Confederate columns of troops as they advanced toward their objectives. Following the Confederate defeats at Mill Springs and Perryville, the regiment protected the rear flank of Confederate columns as they retreated from Kentucky to Tennessee.

Second, the regiment had a mixed record when performing reconnaissance and surveillance operations. On one hand, the regiment frequently maintained contact with enemy forces and provided Confederate leaders information regarding the location of Federal troops. However, leaders of the Second Tennessee Cavalry, understandably, struggled with the fog of war and sometimes misinterpreted the size, location, and

¹³⁰William Josiah McMurray, Deering J. Roberts, and Ralph J. Neal, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A.* (Nashville, TN: The Publication Committee, consisting of W. J. McMurray, D. J. Roberts, and R. J. Neal, 1904), 238. According to author Shelby Foote, Breckinridge’s attack was repulsed by the fire from 58 Federal artillery pieces that, when combined, could fire more than one hundred rounds per minute.

¹³¹*OR*, series 1, vol. 20, part 1, 966-977. Bragg indicated, in his after action report, that he ordered Pegram to support Breckinridge during the attack. Wharton claimed that he did not know about the operation until it was too late to assist Breckinridge.

activity of the enemy. Poor execution of reconnaissance and surveillance operations led to increased confusion on the battlefield for Confederate commanders.

Finally, the Second Tennessee Cavalry had mixed performances on the battlefield when conducting offensive operations. In some instances, the regiment performed well, both independently and when operating alongside other cavalry units. However, the regiment also struggled at times. In Kentucky, the regiment failed to successfully attack, and stop, one of Sill's wagon trains. At Stones River, the regiment faltered when it charged Federal cavalry, and had to be reinforced. In both instances, a lack of effective weapons may have contributed to the regiment's inability to successfully execute offensive tasks.

CHAPTER 4

STONES RIVER TO SURRENDER

As Bragg's forces retreated from Murfreesboro, Pegram's cavalry skirmished with Rosecrans's men until they ended their pursuit of the Army of Tennessee. The Second Tennessee Cavalry, along with the rest of Pegram's command, then returned to East Tennessee to rest and recover.¹³² In early February, Pegram was ordered to Kentucky to find forage and monitor Federal movements, but did not move north until the following month.¹³³

On Sunday, 22 March, the Second Tennessee Cavalry crossed the Cumberland River with the rest of Pegram's brigade, and moved toward Danville, Kentucky. Riding through the night, the lead forces of Pegram's command made contact with Federal troops at Danville at around 2:00 p.m. the next day. The First Louisiana Cavalry and two companies from the Second Tennessee Cavalry charged into the city. For about twenty minutes, they engaged in heavy street fighting to clear the town of Federal forces. One of the Louisiana cavalryman noted, "they [Federal troops] were posted behind houses and haystacks in a big lot, and we did not know they were there until they had opened up on

¹³²Janet Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Pub. Co, 1994), 66:27-37; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 55. The 20 Jan Army of Tennessee strength report does not list Pegram's brigade within the Army of Tennessee structure. Muster reports from Ashby's unit indicate they were in East Tennessee by the end of January.

¹³³*OR*, series 1, vol. 20, part 2, 300, 623, 632; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 114-115; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 2, 647. As the Army of Tennessee sat idle in Tullahoma their food supplies dwindled. Pegram was ordered to go to Kentucky to procure beef for Bragg's Army.

us about fifty yards distant.”¹³⁴ After the brief fight, Federal troops withdrew and Pegram’s men took sixty prisoners. In his after action report, Pegram commended Ashby for his “great gallantry” during the engagement.¹³⁵

Upon clearing Danville, Pegram proceeded north to the outskirts of Gibraltar, Kentucky, and gathered cattle over the course of the next several days. As Pegram travelled north, Ashby’s regiment had reconnoitered southeast toward Crab Orchard. Pegram then turned his force back south and moved toward Somerset, along with the cattle his men had collected.¹³⁶

On 29 March, at Crab Orchard, Ashby notified Pegram that “the enemy was pressing him in heavy force.” Pegram moved faster toward Somerset, and on 30 March established a defensive line along a piece of high ground north of Somerset known as Dutton’s Hill. The Second Tennessee Cavalry pulled back south and positioned themselves on the left of Pegram’s line. Shortly thereafter, Major General Quincy Gillmore attacked Pegram’s men with a force of 1,250 infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Pegram’s artillery was soon overpowered by Gillmore’s six guns, which then turned their fire upon the Confederate cavalry.¹³⁷

As the artillery attacked, a Federal cavalry regiment moved to the right, through a stand of dense vegetation, in an attempt to hit the Confederate left. A detachment from

¹³⁴Hancock, *Hancock’s Diary*, 59.

¹³⁵Hancock, *Hancock’s Diary*, 70. *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 171-174; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 53.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 16-17; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 17-21; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 2, 171-174.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment was ordered into the woods to stop the flank movement. Shortly thereafter, Gillmore ordered his entire force forward and assaulted Pegram's position. As Gillmore's infantry surged forward, Pegram's line gave way. The detachment from the Second Tennessee Cavalry sent to stop the flanking movement was captured. Sensing he could not rally his force, Pegram retreated toward Tennessee.¹³⁸

For the most part, Federal forces did not pursue, and Pegram's retreat was conducted "virtually unmolested." Although the raid did not last very long, Pegram did manage to bring back 537 head of cattle for the Army of Tennessee. However, author James Mohan notes that, the gains came at a substantial loss of 200 casualties which amounted to almost 13 percent of Pegram's command.¹³⁹ These casualties included the detachment from Ashby's regiment that was captured at Dutton's Hill.¹⁴⁰

Following the Kentucky raid, Pegram's brigade briefly recovered in northern Tennessee. However, they soon returned to the southern portion of Kentucky in order to forage for provisions and monitor Federal movements. Ashby's men were part of this force, and operated near Somerset, Monticello, and Albany, Kentucky, over the course of the next two months where they skirmished periodically with Federal forces. During one of these minor engagements, at Somerset, Ashby received a wound to his right ankle that

¹³⁸Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 17-21; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 171-174.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 18-21; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 53-54; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 171-174. Pegram does not indicate how many members of the Second Tennessee Cavalry were captured.

debilitated him for the rest of his life. One observer noted that Ashby “served the balance of the war on crutches” after receiving this wound.¹⁴¹

Colonel John Scott’s Kentucky Raid

In July, Ashby’s men were transferred into a newly formed cavalry brigade under the command of Colonel John Scott, the former commander of the First Louisiana Cavalry Regiment.¹⁴² The Second Tennessee Cavalry was now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Gillespie, the ranking senior officer of the regiment. Records do not specify where Ashby was during this time. However, Mohan speculates that he was likely in Bristol, Tennessee, recovering from the wound he received back in June.

Shortly after the Second Tennessee Cavalry transferred into the new brigade, Scott was ordered into Kentucky to attack Federal lines of communications and gather livestock. He was also supposed to draw attention away from Brigadier General John H. Morgan, who was conducting a raid in Kentucky and Ohio.¹⁴³ On the morning of 25 July,

¹⁴¹Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 108; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 54; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 2, p. 259, 279, 292, 751, 759, 792-793, 861-872; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 22; Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 65: 682; Coffin, “COL. Henry M. Ashby,” 121; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 29. In June, Pegram’s brigade, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, returned back to East Tennessee and scouted near Cumberland Gap.

¹⁴²*OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 2, 915-917; William G. Allen’s memoirs indicate that Ashby’s Regiment was placed in Scott’s brigade upon Pegram’s return to Tennessee. See Allen memoirs, 6. The diary of Samuel Blair states “22 July- started for Jacksboro to join Scott’s Brigade”. See Blair diary, 237. Additionally, records do not indicate why the Second Tennessee Cavalry was transferred into Scott’s organization.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 568, 842, 927; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 23.

Scott left Big Creek Gap and began his raid, arriving in Williamsburg, Kentucky, around noon. Scott's men engaged Federal pickets from the 44th Ohio Mounted Infantry who then retreated toward London, Kentucky. The following day, Scott arrived in London and drove the 44th Ohio from the city.¹⁴⁴

Although his men had been riding north since the twenty-fifth with little to no rest, Scott pressed forward to Richmond, Kentucky. On 28 July, his command clashed with Federals under the command of Colonel William Sanders just south of Richmond. Major Pharaoh Cobb, of the Second Tennessee Cavalry, led a charge into Richmond and soon the cavalry engaged in close quarters fighting. One participant stated that "[we were] shooting till our guns and pistols were empty [and] clubbing each other with sabers, gun barrels or pistols over the head and shoulders."¹⁴⁵ Scott's cavalry drove the Federal forces across the Kentucky River. Following the engagement, Scott learned that Morgan had been captured in Ohio and the Federal forces that caught Morgan were returning to Kentucky to confront him.¹⁴⁶

Despite this, Scott continued north on the twenty-ninth and sent detachments toward Winchester, Lexington, and Paris. That afternoon, Scott learned that Federal troops were moving south to confront his cavalry and turned his force south toward Irvine. With the majority of the brigade covering his rear to check the oncoming Federal

¹⁴⁴OR, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 61; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 23.

¹⁴⁵Allen, *Reminiscences*, 107. The Second Tennessee Cavalry attacked into Richmond with elements of the First Louisiana Cavalry and the Fifth Tennessee Cavalry.

¹⁴⁶Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 81. Morgan was captured on 26 July at Salineville, Ohio.

troops, Scott pressed on toward Irvine with the Second Tennessee Cavalry and a detachment of 150 men.¹⁴⁷

Scott's nonstop movement started to take a toll on the soldiers and animals of his organization. In his after action report, Scott wrote, "for five days and nights the fighting was incessant, not a half hour of rest at any time." The men's fatigue was compounded by a lack of food and having to forage off a land with very little subsistence. Fatigue began to set in not only among the men, but the animals too, and Scott noted that he could only pursue the enemy "as rapid as the jaded condition of my horses would permit." The fact that he had little food to provide the horses contributed to them being, in Scott's words, "broken down."¹⁴⁸

After riding all night in the rain, the Second Tennessee Cavalry engaged Federal troops at Irvine and "routed the enemy." Scott captured two pieces of artillery, 30 wagons, 600 new Enfield rifles, 1,000 saddles and a large quantity of clothing.¹⁴⁹ A few hours later, a pursuing Federal force arrived at Irvine and forced Scott to retreat.

On 31 July, Scott's forces passed through Lancaster and Federal troops were on their heels. Scott's report indicates that the Federals attacked in force and six companies of his organization engaged the enemy and were pressed by the attack. Scott notes that the Second Tennessee Cavalry, and one other organization, were positioned to provide support against the Federal attack but "instead of turning to his relief, came on, in

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 83-84; *OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842.

¹⁴⁹*OR*, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 24.

disorder” and “assured me that they [the unit commanders] could do nothing with their men.” Scott pushed the Second Tennessee Cavalry forward and utilized his other forces to check the Federal advance.¹⁵⁰

That afternoon Scott’s “exhausted men and horses” retreated south toward Tennessee. Scott’s men were pursued by the Federals until they crossed the Cumberland River at Smith’s Shoals. As if the Federals were not enough to deal with, “Bushwhackers” ambushed his retreating men as they fell back to Tennessee.¹⁵¹ Scott’s force finally ended their raid and made camp at Concord, Tennessee, on 6 August.¹⁵²

Chickamauga

On 21 August, Rosecrans’s forces began shelling Bragg’s army, which had recently moved from back Tullahoma to Chattanooga. At the same time, Major General Ambrose Burnside moved his forces south toward Cumberland Gap and Kingston, Tennessee, with the goal of seizing Knoxville. Scott’s brigade, at Big Creek Gap,

¹⁵⁰OR, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842.

¹⁵¹“Bushwhacker” was a term used to describe individuals, or groups, who essentially engaged in forms of irregular warfare against bodies of troops. They were mostly seen as guerilla fighters who were a nuisance. See author Robert Mackey’s Ph.D. dissertation “The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865” for more information about this term.

¹⁵²OR, series 1, vol. 23, part 1, 839-842; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 26. On 3 August, Ambrose Burnside reported that Colonel H.M. Ashby was captured in his report. But as Mohan points out in his book, Burnside’s report was likely in error considering that Ashby’s organization was being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie and Ashby was likely in Bristol, Tennessee recovering from the wound he received back in June.

attempted to slow Burnside's advance over the Cumberland Mountains but was driven back toward Kingston.¹⁵³

On 24 August, the commander of Confederate troops in the Department of East Tennessee, Major General Simon Buckner, moved his forces from Knoxville to Loudon, Tennessee. Scott's men soon joined Buckner's force at Loudon and covered him as he continued moving south to join Bragg. On the same day that Buckner moved to Loudon, Brigadier General Pegram was appointed commander of a newly organized division of cavalry. His new division was composed of Scott's cavalry brigade and a brigade under the command of Brigadier General H. B. Davidson. The Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment remained in Scott's organization. Who, exactly, commanded the regiment during this time is unknown. Although Mohan speculates Ashby was in command, author David Powell indicates that a subordinate commander, Captain John Kuhn, may have been command of the regiment.¹⁵⁴

On 3 September, Pegram's division was assigned to Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest's new cavalry corps. Over the course of the next week, Scott reported directly to Forrest because he was isolated from the rest of Pegram's cavalry.¹⁵⁵ On 8 September, Bragg retreated from Chattanooga after learning Rosecrans's forces were maneuvering south of the city and threatening the rear of his army. By this time, Buckner

¹⁵³Swanson and Langley, *Atlas*, 70; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 149; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 670; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 31.

¹⁵⁴Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 200; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 88; Powell, *Failure*, 53. Scott probably reported directly to Forrest because of the poor relationship between Pegram and Scott that stemmed from Pegram's Kentucky raid earlier in the year.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 27.

had joined Bragg, and Pegram's division covered the Army of Tennessee as it moved south from Chattanooga. Scott's brigade, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, were successful in covering the retreat of the Confederate army along with the rest of Bragg's cavalry. On 9 September, Forrest directed Scott to move his brigade to Ringgold, Georgia, to secure the town and the Western and Atlantic Railroad that enabled the Army of Tennessee to received supplies from Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁵⁶

The following day, Rosecrans, now occupying Chattanooga, ordered Major General Thomas Crittenden's corps to advance forward. Ten thousand Federal infantry now advanced toward Ringgold and the railroad that supplied Bragg's army. Pegram's division, minus Scott's brigade and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, delayed the Federal advance.¹⁵⁷

On 11 September, Crittenden advanced again, this time pushing Colonel John T. Wilder's brigade of mounted infantry toward Ringgold. Scott's men skirmished with Wilder's brigade, which was armed with the first sets of seven-shot Spencer repeating rifles to be fielded by any unit of that size in the western theater. Commenting on the engagement, Wilder reported that "the enemy disputed every inch of the way stubbornly. I have come over ground hard to advance on when disputed as it was today." Although they skirmished well with the enemy, Scott's outgunned and outnumbered men were driven from Ringgold to a point just south of Tunnel Hill, Georgia. Fortunately for Scott,

¹⁵⁶Powell, *Failure*, 53. Following the Battle of Stones River, Kirby Smith was transferred to the Trans-Mississippi Department. Buckner took command of the Department of Tennessee in May 1863.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 58.

reinforcements from Forrest arrived later that evening. Despite this, Powell asserts that Scott's retreat "triggered a general withdrawal of the entire Confederate cavalry line."¹⁵⁸

On 12 September, Scott's brigade, with the balance of Pegram's force, attacked Wilder's men and the Federals retreated toward Ringgold. By the end of the day, Wilder had withdrawn most of his forces west of Ringgold because Crittenden decided to unify his command at Lee and Gordon's Mills. Over the course of the next several days Scott, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, remained near Ringgold and continued guarding the railroad.¹⁵⁹

On 17 September, Federal troops belonging to Brigadier General James B. Steedman's division of Major General Gordon Granger's reserve corps advanced toward Ringgold from Graysville, Georgia. Scott's after action report indicates that his cavalry met Steedman's force outside Ringgold and skirmished with the advancing Federals, ultimately preventing them from entering Ringgold. That evening, Scott attacked Steedman's encampment with four companies of the Second Tennessee Cavalry and one piece of artillery. Scott reported that he "surprised their camp" and threw the Federal troops into a state of confusion. Although author David Powell argues that Scott's actions against Steedman's forces were "inconsequential" Scott, and the Second Tennessee

¹⁵⁸OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 1, 446; OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 2, 530-532; OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 3, 546; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 28; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 220; Powell, *Failure*, 60-61; Shelby Foote, *The Civil War, a Narrative: Fredericksburg to Meridian* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 668.

¹⁵⁹Powell, *Failure*, 63-65, 83; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 33. Allen recalled the fighting as being "hard and hot" and that they "had a hard fight with Wilder's advance."

Cavalry, did meet Bragg's intent for his cavalry to keep the Federals from seizing Ringgold and disrupting Confederate lines of communication.¹⁶⁰

On 18 September, Bragg moved his army against Rosecrans's force. Believing that Crittenden's corps, located at Lee and Gordon's Mill, was the northernmost point of the Federal line, Bragg decided to maneuver his infantry into position to attack Crittenden's left flank. As Bragg's infantry moved north, Forrest ordered Scott's cavalry from Ringgold toward Rossville to guard the Old Federal Ford road. As they approached Rossville, Scott's force made contact with a Federal infantry brigade, belonging to Granger's reserve corps, at Red House Bridge. The Confederate cavalry skirmished with the enemy throughout the day. That night, Scott, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, withdrew from Red House Bridge.¹⁶¹

On the morning of 19 September, as men from Major General George Thomas's Fourteenth Corps collided with elements of Forrest's cavalry brigade, Scott's men, in the north, advanced again toward Red House Bridge. There they encountered elements of Granger's men who were blocking the road to Rossville. Scott ordered the Second Tennessee Cavalry forward to take the bridge. As they maneuvered forward, the cavalrymen were ambushed by Federal troops who were hiding in a stand of scrub pine. Scott sent additional forces forward to reinforce the Second Tennessee Cavalry. Scott's

¹⁶⁰OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 2, 471, 488, 530-532; Powell, *Failure*, 93.

¹⁶¹OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 2, 530-532; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 29; Powell, *Failure*, 97-98, 125-127. According to Powell, "[Scott] contributed nothing to the security of the army's flank that night" although Federal forces did not exploit his departure from Red House Bridge.

men attacked the Federal infantry and artillery only to suffer significant losses. Finally, Scott stopped his attack and remained in place as darkness fell.¹⁶²

David Powell indicates in his book *Failure in the Saddle: Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joe Wheeler and the Confederate Cavalry in the Chickamauga Campaign* that Captain Kuhn, the commander of the Second Tennessee Cavalry, may have been drunk during the attack. Regardless, the Second Tennessee Cavalry haphazardly executed the attack which resulted in unnecessary casualties and failed to achieve Scott's end state of securing the bridge. To be fair, there was probably no need for Scott to order the attack in the first place considering his mission was to simply delay a Federal advance and not seize Red House Bridge.¹⁶³

On 20 September, Scott's men continued to skirmish with Federal forces near Ringgold Road. The force they made contact with was Colonel Robert Minty's cavalry, who were ordered by Granger to watch the Ringold-Chattanooga road, and monitor any Rebel movement as Granger moved to reinforce Thomas. By the end of the day, Scott's men remained near Red House Bridge and protected the approach to Ringgold. On the one hand, Scott, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, were in position and ready to prevent Federal troops from advancing toward Ringgold. On the other hand, Scott's force was also in a position to apply pressure to Granger and possibly prevent him from moving to reinforce Major General George Thomas's force.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶²Powell, *Failure*, 147-152.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁶⁴*OR*, series 1, vol. 30, part 1, 146; *OR*, series 1, vol. 30, part 3, 755.

On the twenty-first, Scott's brigade rejoined the balance of Pegram's cavalry division. The brigade then engaged the rear guard of Minty's cavalry as Rosecrans's force retreated back to Chattanooga. On the following day, Scott's men crossed Missionary Ridge and advanced toward Chattanooga, where they encountered elements of the 59th Ohio Infantry that were entrenched in anticipation of the Confederate advance. Scott pushed the Second Tennessee Cavalry forward, where they surprised the Federals with a mounted charge. The Federal commander was convinced that he was "facing a heavy force of infantry and cavalry" and gave orders for the bridge he was guarding at Shallow Ford Gap to be burned. Scott's men continued their attack and maneuvered to the rear of the 59th Ohio, forcing them to fall back toward Chattanooga. By the end of the day, Scott withdrew from the ridge back to Chickamauga Creek. Unlike the failed attack at Red House Bridge just two days prior, the Second Tennessee Cavalry successfully executed the task to secure the bridge at Shallow Ford and achieved the objective that Scott set out for them to obtain.¹⁶⁵

Scott's troops, including the Second Tennessee Cavalry, were soon relieved of their positions near Chattanooga and moved southwest to Bird's Mill in order to recover from the recent activity. From there, they were ordered to proceed northeast, toward Knoxville, in order to observe any movements made by Burnside's forces. By 26 September, Scott's men arrived in Riceville, Tennessee.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 2, 530-532; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 29; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 222; Powell, *Failure*, 189-192; OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 1, 834-835.

¹⁶⁶Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 222.

The Battle of Chickamauga took a toll on the Second Tennessee Cavalry even though Scott's brigade operated on the far right of Bragg's line. Scott's after-action report indicates that the regiment suffered a total of nineteen casualties, the most of any organization in the brigade. Scott also states that he lost "two brave and gallant officers, whose places it will be most difficult to fill." These officers, Captain William Ford and Lieutenant R. C. Crozier, were both from the Second Tennessee Cavalry and the only officers that were killed in Scott's brigade during the Chickamauga campaign.¹⁶⁷

Wheeler's Raid and the Winter of 1863-1864

Following the Battle of Chickamauga, Bragg wrestled with how to best deal with Rosecrans's forces in Chattanooga. Understanding that Rosecrans was short on supplies, Bragg decided to lay siege to Chattanooga and force Rosecrans to either retreat or surrender in response to his dwindling provisions. To sever Rosecrans's lines of communications, Bragg ordered Wheeler and Forrest to proceed north and conduct a cavalry raid. At this point, almost every Confederate cavalry unit was severely depleted in supplies and ammunition and Forrest objected to Bragg's order. Because of his objections, and friction between the two men, Bragg ordered Forrest to turn over a portion of his command to Wheeler.¹⁶⁸

Brigadier General Henry Brevard Davidson, Colonel John Scott, and Colonel George B. Hodge soon reported to Wheeler with their tattered cavalry brigades. In

¹⁶⁷OR, series 1, vol. 30, part 2, 530-532.

¹⁶⁸John Witherspoon Du Bose, *General Joseph Wheeler and the Army of Tennessee* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1912), 206-208; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 233; John Dyer, *"Fightin' Joe" Wheeler* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1941), 126.

describing these units one officer wrote that “the saddles had not been removed from the backs of the weary horses in three days and neither men nor horses were in condition to begin a forced march across the state of Tennessee. Many of the animals were hobbling along for want of shoes and the men were very hungry.” Seeing the condition of his new units, Wheeler conducted a hasty inspection and separated many of the worn horses. The three units were then consolidated into one combined organization under the command of Davidson.¹⁶⁹

On the second of October, Wheeler’s men crossed over Walden’s Ridge and moved into the Sequatchie Valley of Tennessee. Little evidence exists that specifically describes the actions of the Second Tennessee Cavalry during Wheeler’s raid. The *Diary of Samuel T. Blair* confirms that the unit was in Davidson’s division, and moved with Wheeler’s corps north to the outskirts of Nashville, before finally retreating south toward Alabama. Blair’s diary simply outlines the location of the unit on a daily basis but provides no additional information regarding the regiment’s actions during the raid. Wheeler’s corps, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, crossed into Alabama on 9 October, effectively ending Wheeler’s raid on Rosecrans’s lines of communication.¹⁷⁰

From Alabama, Wheeler proceeded east and rejoined the Army of Tennessee, still laying siege to Chattanooga. The Second Tennessee Cavalry, back under the command of Ashby, remained within the cavalry brigade commanded by Davidson that was now in

¹⁶⁹Dodson and Wheeler, *Campaigns of Wheeler*, 117-120; *OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 3, 618; Du Bose, *Campaigns of Wheeler* 207; Dyer, *Fightin’ Joe” Wheeler*, 126.

¹⁷⁰Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 29; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 223; Dyer, *Fightin’ Joe” Wheeler*, 208-213; Blair, *Diary*, 240-241.

Wharton's cavalry division.¹⁷¹ Over the course of the next month, the men of the Second Tennessee Cavalry spent their time scouting the mountain passes in and around Chattanooga. In late November, the Federal Army at Chattanooga, now under the command of Major General Ulysses S. Grant, attacked Bragg's forces located on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. Davidson's organization was on the Confederate extreme left when the Federals advanced.¹⁷²

The *Official Records* are silent in regards to the movements of Davidson's brigade during this time as Bragg fought Grant and retreated south. Most likely, the Second Tennessee Cavalry did not encounter Federal forces when Grant advanced on Lookout Mountain. Sometime after 27 November, Davidson received orders to fall back to Dalton, Georgia, and rejoined the Army of Tennessee.¹⁷³

In late November, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Wheeler's cavalry corps, conducted outpost duty at Tunnel Hill, Georgia. The Army of Tennessee established its winter quarters and General Joseph E. Johnston was appointed to

¹⁷¹Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 224-225; *OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 2, 670; George B. Guild, *A Brief Narrative of the Fourth Tennessee Cavalry Regiment: Wheeler's Corps, Army of Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: 1913), 49-50.

¹⁷²Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 224-225; *OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 2, 670; Guild, *A Brief Narrative*, 49-50. On 5 November, General Davidson, was ordered by Wheeler to take his units to a location ten miles northwest of Dalton, Georgia to protect the railroad that ran from Resaca to Chickamauga Station. But within a week he moved back near Trenton, Georgia and occupied the confederate left at Lookout Mountain.

¹⁷³ Foote, *Fredericksburg to Meridian*, 840; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 225; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 40; Guild, *A Brief Narrative*, 54; *OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 2, 672. Davidson's command was detached from the rest of Wheeler's forces, who went to Knoxville to aid Lieutenant General James Longstreet in attacking Burnside.

command the Army on 16 December. Wheeler's men scouted and skirmished throughout most of the winter.¹⁷⁴

Over the winter months, command of the Second Tennessee Cavalry shifted often. In October and November, Ashby was in command of the regiment. But in early December, the regiment was under the command of Captain John H. Kuhn of "A" Company and, by the end of the month, had shifted to Captain William Smith of "E" Company. The reason for the frequent changing of commanders is not addressed in the *Official Records*. Mohan speculates that Ashby's absence may have been due to complications from the wound he received in Kentucky. Existing records do not explain why neither Lieutenant Colonel Henry Gillespie nor Major Pharaoh Cobb, who were next in line for command, were not in charge of the regiment during Ashby's absence.¹⁷⁵

Interestingly, the Second Tennessee Cavalry fell under the command of two captains during this time. Mohan's research indicates that casualties during Wheeler's October raid, and desertions, took their toll. He wrote that, in January 1864, "Ashby stated [in a letter] that several companies within the Second Tennessee were down to only fifteen to twenty men each and under the command of junior lieutenants." Author David Powell speculates that the regiment numbered no more than 300 men during this time. The size of the regiment helps explain why it was commanded by captains. Only one other regiment within Wheeler's corps was commanded by a captain at this time. The

¹⁷⁴Guild, *A Brief Narrative*, 55-59; Foote, *Fredericksburg to Meridian*, 887.

¹⁷⁵*OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 2, 590, 662; *OR*, series 1, vol. 31, part 3, 805, 887; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 30-32.

majority of the cavalry regiments were commanded by officers who held the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel.¹⁷⁶

In December, Davidson's brigade, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, moved from Tunnel Hill, to the vicinity of Rome, Georgia, to perform scouting duties, report enemy movements, and procure horses. Davidson's cavalry also ventured into eastern Alabama in late January and February. In March, Federal officers reported that Davidson's unit returned from Alabama and was back in the vicinity of Dalton, Georgia. Federal reports also noted that the Confederate horses were "in bad condition." From Dalton, the Second Tennessee Cavalry proceeded north to Tunnel Hill where they picketed and skirmished with Federal cavalry throughout the month of April. During the latter portion of the month, the regiment was reorganized into Brigadier General William Y. C. Humes's Division and in a cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel James T. Wheeler. Records indicate that Kuhn was back in command of the regiment.¹⁷⁷

Sherman's March to Atlanta

On 5 May, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman began marching his forces from Chattanooga toward Atlanta, Georgia. Just two months prior, Grant was called from Chattanooga to Washington and promoted to general in chief of all Federal forces. Soon thereafter, Grant chose Sherman to head the Military Division of the Mississippi, whose

¹⁷⁶Ibid.; Powell, *Failure*, 250-251.

¹⁷⁷*OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 2, 369, 391, 605, 608, 658; *OR*, series 1, vol. 32, part 3, 29, 871; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 41; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 31; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 28-33. Reports indicate that Davidson's brigade had operated as far west as Gadsden, Alabama and that the Second Tennessee Cavalry was at Tunnel Hill on 11 March.

area of operations spanned from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. Sherman's advance marked the beginning of a long struggle for the soldiers of the Second Tennessee Cavalry. One member of the unit declared "nothing of importance happened until Sherman made his advance on Dalton. From that time on, until the Yankees captured Atlanta, it was almost a continual battle." The *Official Records* indicate that the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment was still commanded by Kuhn during this time and was part of Colonel James Wheeler's brigade of Humes's cavalry division. Where Ashby was when Sherman began his movement south is unknown.¹⁷⁸

On 7 May, Federal forces struck Major General Wheeler's cavalry pickets at Tunnel Hill. The Second Tennessee Cavalry retreated, with the rest of Wheeler's corps, to the east toward Varnell's Station. Sensing that the Confederates held a strong position at Dalton, Sherman moved south toward Resaca. Wheeler's cavalry discovered Sherman's move, and informed Johnston, who promptly abandoned Dalton and moved south.¹⁷⁹

On 13 May, Johnston's army arrived at Resaca and engaged Sherman's force. The Second Tennessee Cavalry was located east of Johnston's breastworks with the rest of Wheeler's corps. Around this time, Ashby assumed command of Colonel James Wheeler's cavalry brigade. Strangely, Wheeler returned back to commanding his former cavalry regiment, the 1st [6th] Tennessee Cavalry, within Ashby's brigade. No evidence exists outlining why Ashby took command of the cavalry brigade from Wheeler and,

¹⁷⁸Swanson and Landley, *Atlas*, 84; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 33.

¹⁷⁹Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, 161-167; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 49.

what exactly, Ashby was doing prior to assuming command of the brigade. Ashby's brigade was composed of the First [6th] Tennessee Cavalry, Second Tennessee Cavalry, Fifth Tennessee Cavalry and the Ninth Tennessee Cavalry.¹⁸⁰

At Resaca, Major General Wheeler's mission was to reinforce the line if the Federals broke through. That afternoon, a Federal advance almost turned the Confederate right but the Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Humes's cavalry division, stopped the attack. The efforts of the regiment helped buy Johnston time to respond to the Federal attack. That evening Johnston evacuated Resaca, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry served as part of the rear guard. Over the course of the next several days, the regiment aided Wheeler in covering Johnston's retreat.¹⁸¹

On the twentieth, Johnston arrived at Cartersville, and crossed the Etowah River, where he established a defensive position. Sherman stopped his pursuit of the Confederates and rested his army. On the night of the twenty-fourth, Wheeler moved north to Cassville to determine where the Federal army was located and to attack Sherman's lines of communication.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰OR, series 1, vol. 38, part 3, 650; Edwin L. Drake, *Chronological Summary of Battles and Engagements of the Western Armies of the Confederate States, Including Summary of Lt. Gen. Joseph Wheeler's Cavalry Engagements* (Nashville, TN: Tavel, Eastman and Howell, 1879), 87; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 52.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Allen, *Reminiscences*, 52-54; Edward P. Shanahan, *Atlanta Campaign Staff Ride Briefing Book* (Atlanta, GA: Office of the Command Historian, United States Army Reserve Command, 1995), 28-34; Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, 168-169; Edward G. Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler in Blue and Gray* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), 152-153; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 86.

That evening, a detachment of Wheeler's men attacked a Federal supply train, guarded by a band of cavalry under the command of Major General George Stoneman, at Cass Station. The Second Tennessee Cavalry, and the rest of Humes's cavalry division, acted as the reserve for the operation. Evidence from Andrew Williams's diary indicates that Captain William Smith was back in command of the regiment during this time but does not indicate what happened to Captain John Kuhn. Wheeler's force captured the supply train and then continued north to Cassville.¹⁸³

As Wheeler proceeded to Cassville, Stoneman's cavalry charged in his direction, intending to rescue the supply train. In his memoirs, Andrew Williams stated that "I looked across the field and could see two full regiments of Yankees advancing toward us in double." The Second Tennessee Cavalry, riding in the rear of Wheeler's column, was ordered forward to stop the Federal advance. Wheeler directed Smith to "wait until the enemy wavered to charge, and then they themselves were to charge."¹⁸⁴

The Second Tennessee Cavalry attacked the advancing Federal cavalry with the support of another cavalry regiment. To their left, the Eighth Texas Cavalry formed a line of battle and then "started at the Yankees as fast as their horses could carry them." In describing the execution of his orders, Wheeler stated that the charge "was magnificently obeyed; the enemy came up in fine style and charged with great ferocity. They were met, however, as directed and driven back in utter confusion." The Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the Eighth Texas Cavalry, successfully drove back the enemy. Following the

¹⁸³Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" *Wheeler*, 160. Cass Station was located approximately two miles southwest of Cassville.

¹⁸⁴Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" *Wheeler*, 169-170; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 40-43.

engagement at Cassville, Wheeler's corps moved back south and rejoined Johnston's Army.¹⁸⁵

On the same day that Wheeler received orders to move to Cassville, Sherman moved south toward New Hope Church. Here, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, along with the rest of Wheeler's corps, found themselves operating as Johnston's reserve. During the Battle of New Hope Church, the regiment fought from both mounted and dismounted positions, spending the majority of their time in the Confederate trenches. On 27 May, Sherman attacked the Confederate right near Pickett's Mill. The men of the Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Wheeler's corps, played an important role in defeating the Federal attack by holding their positions to the right of Major General Patrick Cleburne's infantry division and preventing the Confederate right from being turned. William G. Allen indicates in his memoirs that the Second Tennessee Cavalry fought alongside Brigadier General John H. Kelly's division against Brigadier General William B. Hazen's brigade. Both Allen and Andrew Williams indicate that Ashby's brigade suffered significant casualties during the engagement. In describing the fighting near New Hope Church, Williams stated: "I went on through the war to the surrender but this was the hottest battle I was in."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" Wheeler, 170-172; Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 154; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 34-39; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 56-57; Allen states that, in a meeting he had with Wheeler years after the Civil War, Wheeler told him "Ashby's Brigade and Allen's Brigade lost more men, killed and wounded in the three charges you made in the Pickett Mill fight in three hours, when Howard and Palmer's corps were trying to turn Gen. Joe Johnston's right, than were killed and wounded in the Spanish American War."

On 1 June, Sherman moved east and Johnston paralleled him until they reached Kennesaw Mountain located just north of Marietta. Over the course of the next several weeks, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, as part of Wheeler's corps, defended against Federal attacks at different points along the Confederate line. On 27 June, when Sherman assaulted Kennesaw Mountain, the Second Tennessee Cavalry fought against the Federal advance from within the Confederate trenches.¹⁸⁷

Following the Federal defeat at Kennesaw Mountain, Sherman moved his army south and forced Johnston out of his entrenchments. On 3 July, Johnston retreated toward the Chattahoochee River and Wheeler's cavalry covered the right flank of his army. After crossing the Chattahoochee, Johnston continued retreating and established a new defensive line south of Peachtree Creek. Soon, he was relieved by the authorities in Richmond and replaced by Lieutenant General John Bell Hood.¹⁸⁸

Over the course of the next several days, Sherman built up his army's strength in order to seize Atlanta, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry skirmished with Federal cavalry and infantry. On 17 July, Major General George Thomas's force advanced toward Peachtree Creek and collided with Wheeler's cavalry. The Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Wheeler's force, delayed Thomas's advance by fighting from breastworks but were eventually driven back to the right side of Hood's Army on 19 July.

¹⁸⁷Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 157-159; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 356-357; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 87-89; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 59-61.

¹⁸⁸Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, 175-178.

Wheeler's efforts, in conjunction with Lieutenant General William Hardee's infantry, gave Hood time to prepare for the advancing Federals.¹⁸⁹

On 20 July, Hood launched an attack against Sherman at Peachtree Creek. However, Hood's force did not execute the plan as envisioned. Simultaneously, Sherman sent Major General James McPherson's Army of the Tennessee toward the Confederate right to cut the railroad leading out of Atlanta. Wheeler's cavalry, located on the Confederate right, were left largely unaided in their efforts to confront the heavy columns of McPherson's force. Remarkably, Wheeler's men held their positions near Bald Hill and prevented the Confederate right from being turned. The next day, Wheeler's cavalry fought desperately to hold the Confederate right, with the aid of Cleburne's division, which had shifted to Wheeler's location the previous night. The fighting at Bald Hill was intense. Author James McPherson described the engagement by stating "repeated waves of blue infantry assaulted the hill, with fierce hand-to-hand encounters." That afternoon, the Second Tennessee Cavalry was driven from Bald Hill, along with the rest of Wheeler's force. Federal forces now commanded the hill and were in position to envelop Hood's Army.¹⁹⁰

In response to this threat, Hood sent Wheeler's corps around McPherson's force in an attempt to strike the enemy rear. That evening, Wheeler, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, rode to Decatur where they struck McPherson's supply trains and drove back two Federal infantry regiments. On 22 July, Wheeler's men left Decatur and returned to

¹⁸⁹Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" Wheeler, 175-176; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 64; Shanahan, *Atlanta Campaign Staff Ride*, 66; Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 160.

¹⁹⁰Shanahan, *Atlanta Campaign Staff Ride*, 67-68; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 440-445; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 68-69; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 754.

Hood's main body, in order to assist Hardee, who had called for Wheeler's help in conducting an attack on McPherson's front. Following the failed attack, the Confederates fell back into the entrenchments around Atlanta and the siege of the city began.¹⁹¹

On 27 July, Sherman sent two large cavalry columns around Atlanta in another effort to sever Hood's lines of communication. Stoneman led a cavalry column southeast of Atlanta, and Brigadier General Edward McCook moved to the southwest, intending to join their forces at Lovejoy's Station. As Stoneman moved toward Macon, Georgia, Wheeler dispatched elements of his command to intercept him. Wheeler then learned that McCook had moved around the Confederate left, successfully destroyed supplies at Fayetteville, and was located at Lovejoy's Station.¹⁹²

Wheeler moved the balance of his force toward Newnan where he clashed with McCook's cavalry. In *Fightin' Joe Wheeler*, Dyer states that "McCook's command was not entirely wiped out, but it was so badly cut to pieces that its effectiveness was destroyed." In the meantime, Stoneman, and five hundred of his men, were captured by

¹⁹¹Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 446; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 91, 98; Dyer, *"Fightin' Joe" Wheeler*, 179-180; Shanahan, *Atlanta Campaign Staff Ride*, 68-72.

¹⁹²Dyer, *"Fightin' Joe" Wheeler*, 181-185; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 91.

the detachment sent to stop him. All told, Wheeler captured over 3,000 prisoners, a major general, five brigade commanders, ten stands of colors and several thousand horses.¹⁹³

Following the engagement at Newnan, Wheeler took his men to Covington, Georgia, to rest and recuperate before returning to the entrenchments around Atlanta. Within a few days, Hood ordered Wheeler to conduct a raid into Tennessee to disrupt Sherman's lines of communication. On 10 August, Wheeler moved around the Union left flank toward Marietta and the Second Tennessee Cavalry accompanied him. Like Wheeler's raid of October 1863, there is little evidence that outlines the actions of the Second Tennessee Cavalry during this raid. All that is known is that the regiment accompanied Wheeler from the beginning of the operation and crossed back into Alabama with Wheeler's corps on 9 September at the conclusion of the raid.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³Ibid., There is conflicting information in regards to the role the Second Tennessee Cavalry played in Wheeler's efforts to deal with Stoneman and McCook. In *Tighten Your Girth, Slacken Your Rein*, author Eddie Lawson is of the opinion that the regiment remained behind in the trenches near Atlanta when Wheeler left to confront Stoneman and McCook. However, Drake indicates in *Chronological Summary of Battles and Affairs of Lt. Gen. Joseph Wheeler's Command* that "parts" of the Second Tennessee Cavalry fought the enemy at Newnan in. Of note, the information in Drake's publication was verified by Joseph Wheeler. Furthermore, William G. Allen's memoir and Andrew Williams's diary indicate that the regiment was with Brigadier General William "Red" Jackson's division at Newnan. Evidence indicates that at least some portion of the regiment took part in Wheeler's attack on McCook's force near Newnan.

¹⁹⁴Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" *Wheeler*, 188-191; Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 169-172; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 91-93; Dodson and Wheeler, *Campaigns of Wheeler*, 248-252; Near Knoxville, Wheeler split his command and allowed Brigadier General John "Cerro Gordo" Williams to take two brigades and attack a Federal garrison at Strawberry Plains, Tennessee. Author Eddie Lawson is of the opinion that a portion of the Second Tennessee Cavalry may have gone with Williams on the expedition to Strawberry Plains. However, evidence from Edwin Drake's work, and Andrew Williams's diary, indicates that at least some portion of the regiment accompanied Wheeler through the entirety of his raid.

Savannah to Surrender

While Wheeler was in Tennessee, Sherman forced Hood from Atlanta, and the Federal Army seized control of Atlanta on 2 September. Hood retreated south, to Palmetto, Georgia, where he decided to move behind Sherman in order to draw him out from Atlanta. In early October, Wheeler rejoined the Army of Tennessee near Rome, Georgia.

From Rome, the Army of Tennessee proceeded northeast, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, along with the rest of Wheeler's corps covered the flanks of the army. As Sherman's force approached, Hood moved southwest to La Fayette, Georgia. On 16 October, both the Seventeenth and Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiments lost twelve men in fighting at Ship's Gap as Sherman attempted to attack Hood's force. Instead of making a stand, Hood withdrew to Alabama and decided to move north toward Nashville.¹⁹⁵

As Hood proceeded north toward Tennessee, a decision was made by General P.G.T. Beauregard, the commander of the newly created Department of the West, to detach Wheeler's cavalry from Hood's army. On 22 October, Wheeler's force was assigned to the command of Lieutenant General William Hardee, who was in charge of the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. By 13 November, Wheeler's force, including the Second Tennessee Cavalry, had returned to Jonesboro, Georgia, and monitored Sherman's forces. In describing the condition of Wheeler's cavalry, author

¹⁹⁵ Allen, *Reminiscences*, 84; Dyer, "*Fightin' Joe*" *Wheeler*, 201-202; Dodson and Wheeler, *Campaigns of Wheeler*, 275-276; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 482-483. Ship's Gap is located east of LaFayette, Georgia. Hood envisioned taking his forces through Nashville, to Kentucky, and then aiding General Lee who was engaged with General Grant in the east.

Edward Longacre states “almost all of these [Wheeler’s] units had been decimated by the rigors of battle and raiding.” For the most part, Wheeler’s depleted cavalry corps was the only thing that stood between Sherman and Savannah, Georgia.¹⁹⁶

As Hood proceeded north, Sherman decided to march southeast toward Savannah, and led his troops out of Atlanta on 16 November. Wheeler, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, attempted to delay Sherman’s advance but were incapable of performing the task. As Sherman’s column neared Savannah, Wheeler, and the Second Tennessee Cavalry, crossed the Savannah River into South Carolina. Hardee placed Wheeler in charge of guarding his lines of communications in and around Hardeeville, South Carolina. Andrew Williams notes that the Second Tennessee Cavalry “remained in sight of Savannah until after Christmas” and left the area when Hardee evacuated the city.¹⁹⁷

Why did the men of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment continue to fight against the Federals, considering they were significantly overmatched by Sherman’s force? East Tennessee had long fallen into Federal hands, with little chance of the Confederates regaining the region. The authors of the primary source material used for this research do not reveal the answer to why Confederates from East Tennessee continued fighting in the face of such long odds. However, author Todd Groce probably captures the reason best in the preface of his book *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870*. In Groce’s opinion, the reason “was simple”: East Tennesseans “had no place to go” and could not return home because

¹⁹⁶Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 178-179; Allen, *Reminiscences*, 86-87; Drake, *Chronological Summary*, 93-94.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*; Mohon, “Henry Ashby’s 2nd Tennessee,” 33.

Unionists would seek revenge. For many of the Confederates from East Tennessee, their only hope for a better future depended on the bleak chance that the Confederate military would prevail in the end.¹⁹⁸

In January 1865, Colonel Alfred Roman conducted an inspection of Wheeler's cavalry corps for General Beauregard. For the most part, he found the majority of Wheeler's organization to be poorly disciplined and lacking in military bearing. However, there was one brigade that stood out to Roman, and it was Ashby's brigade. In his report, Roman recommended Ashby for promotion and stated "He has, in my opinion, the best brigade in Wheeler's corps. His men look well, their horses and equipment are properly cared for, and their soldierly bearing is very satisfactory."¹⁹⁹

In early February, Sherman's forces left Savannah and entered South Carolina. The *Official Records* indicate that the Second Tennessee Cavalry was now under the command of John Kuhn, who had been promoted from captain to lieutenant colonel at some point in the preceding months. Kuhn remained commander of the regiment for the duration of the war. The Second Tennessee Cavalry still resided within Ashby's brigade and Humes's division of Wheeler's cavalry corps.²⁰⁰

As Sherman's main column proceeded toward Columbia, South Carolina, Brigadier General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick moved his Federal cavalry toward Augusta, Georgia. On 11 February, Wheeler's force, along with the Second Tennessee Cavalry, clashed with Kilpatrick at Aiken, South Carolina, and stopped the Federal cavalry from

¹⁹⁸Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, xiii.

¹⁹⁹Powell, *Failure*, 305-312.

²⁰⁰OR, series 1, vol. 47, part 2, 1072.

attacking Augusta. Recalling the battle, one of Ashby's officers stated that the brigade's action at Aiken was "one of its most conspicuous fights."²⁰¹

Following the engagement at Aiken, Wheeler's cavalry skirmished with Sherman's column as it proceeded through South Carolina and into North Carolina. As Sherman's forces proceeded toward Fayetteville, Wheeler's men and the Confederate Army withdrew. Once again in command, General Joseph Johnston planned to concentrate his forces at Fayetteville and make a stand against the advancing Federal army. On the evening of 9 March, Wheeler's men located Kilpatrick's Federal cavalry encamped at a place called Monroe's Crossroads.²⁰²

The following morning, Wheeler conducted an attack on Kilpatrick's camp and surprised his sleeping enemy. The Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Humes's division, attacked from the west as the rest of Wheeler's men attacked from the north. When the attack began, Humes's division was located on Wheeler's right and, because of a dense fog, advanced into a swamp. In *Fiery Dawn, The Civil War Battle at Monroe's Crossroads, North Carolina*, Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton indicate the advance into the swamp caused the horses to panic and created confusion within Humes's ranks. By the time Humes's men had regrouped, members of the First (U.S.) Alabama Regiment, who were not impacted by Wheeler's charge, suppressed them. Humes withdrew and prepared to advance in another direction. However, by the time he was ready to advance

²⁰¹Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 192-193; Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, 218; Coffin, "COL. Henry M. Ashby," 121.

²⁰²Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 196-197.

again, the Federals had recovered from the Confederate attack, and proceeded to drive Wheeler's cavalry away.²⁰³

Wheeler's cavalry then proceeded east toward Fayetteville, North Carolina, under the harassment of Federal forces. The Second Tennessee Cavalry covered Wheeler's retreat by barricading the roadways and skirmishing with the advancing Federals. When the balance of the regiment arrived at Fayetteville, on the following day, they "had to cut their way through the Yankees to get to the bridge to cross the Cape Fear River" before setting the bridge on fire.²⁰⁴

From Fayetteville, the Second Tennessee Cavalry proceeded to Averagesboro, North Carolina where they rejoined Wheeler and continued to monitor Sherman's movement. The regiment then moved to Bentonville, North Carolina, where the men fought on both the right and left flank of the Confederate army from 19 to 21 March. Over the course of the next month, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Wheeler's force, screened Johnston's army as it moved north. On 26 April, Johnston agreed to Sherman's terms of surrender and the war ended for the men of the Second

²⁰³Ibid., 197-198; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 53-54; Eric J. Wittenberg, *The Battle of Monroe's Crossroads And the Civil War's Final Campaign* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2006), 126; Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton, *Fiery Dawn: The Civil War Battle at Monroe's Crossroads, North Carolina* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, 1999), 58-70. Humes was wounded at Monroe's Crossroads and Colonel Ashby assumed command of his cavalry division.

²⁰⁴Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 54-55; *OR*, series 1, vol. 47, part 1, 1130-1133.

Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. On 3 May, the men received their parole and began their long journey home.²⁰⁵

Epilogue

Following their surrender, many men from the Second Tennessee Cavalry returned to their homes in order to rebuild their lives and reunite with families. However, they soon learned there was a price to be paid for choosing to fight for the Confederacy. Historian Todd Groce describes East Tennessee Confederate soldiers' experiences in returning home best in his book *Mountain Rebels*, stating "returning soldiers found themselves targets of mob violence, criminal and civil suits, and even indictments for treason. Many East Tennessee secessionists were forced into hiding or exile, brutally beaten, attacked in the courts, or even killed for having sided with the Confederacy."²⁰⁶

Although some members of the Second Tennessee Cavalry were able to rebuild their lives in East Tennessee, others suffered as Unionists sought revenge. Abner Baker, who avenged the murder of his father by killing the former Union soldier who was responsible for the act, was killed by a mob that broke into Baker's jail cell and hung him from a tree. In the eyes of the mob, the actions of the former rebel, in avenging his father's death, were intolerable and had to be dealt with swiftly. William G. Taylor, a

²⁰⁵Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last*, 199-201; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 253-255; Williams, *Andrew Jackson Williams Papers*, 58-60; Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, *Bentonville: The Final Battle of Sherman and Johnston* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 198-202; *OR*, series 1, vol. 47, part 1, 1126; *OR*, series 1, vol. 47, part 2, 1392-1393.

²⁰⁶Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 127; In the book *The Lookout Rangers, Colonel Henry Marshall Ashby and the 2nd Tennessee Cavalry Regiment* authors E. Raymond Evans and David Scott indicate that many Confederate veterans from East Tennessee moved to Atlanta, Georgia in order to avoid the violence in East Tennessee.

former member of the regiment, stated that he attempted to rebuild his life but “disbanded Federal soldiers in this part of East Tennessee soon made it unsafe for ex-Confederates to remain here and I went to Kentucky.” Author Eddie Lawson explains in his book *Tighten Your Girth, Slacken Your Rein* that his family members moved from East Tennessee to Kentucky because of violence in the region.²⁰⁷

Henry Marshall Ashby was not immune from the violence. Following the war, Knox County prosecutor E. C. Camp, a former major in the Union Army, brought charges against Ashby for treason and the murder of the Unionists he captured at Woodson’s Gap in 1862. Ashby returned to Knoxville from his refuge in Atlanta to stand trial and was acquitted of the charges. Although he achieved victory in court, Ashby now had a personal grudge against Camp and sought revenge. On 10 July 1868, Ashby confronted Camp at his law office and, according to Mohan, “called him to go to the river and settle their dispute.” As they proceeded down the street, Camp hesitated to go further and the two men fought. Camp shot Ashby three times and the former commander of the

²⁰⁷Groce, *Mountain Rebels*, 136; Gustavus Dyer, et al., *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires* (Easley, S.C: Southern Historical Press, 1985), 2041; Lawson and Bible, *Tighten Your Girth*, 297-302. As in the case of Abner Baker, many former Confederates returned home and sought revenge for actions taken by Union sympathizers during the war. Although many Unionist attacks against former Confederates were vengeful, some of the attacks might have been justified due to the conduct of the men they killed.

Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment died instantly. Camp was charged with Ashby's murder but the charges were dropped in February 1869.²⁰⁸

Analysis

Following the Battle of Stones River, the Second Tennessee Cavalry was active throughout the remainder of the war. As in the preceding years, the regiment seems to have performed at its best when it was conducting defensive operations. In Kentucky, the regiment protected the flank of Pegram's cavalry brigade at the Battle of Dutton's Hill. However, a few months later, the regiment failed to reinforce the First Louisiana Cavalry near Lancaster, Kentucky, as Colonel John Scott's cavalry brigade retrograded from the state. Prior to the Battle of Chickamauga, the regiment successfully aided in evacuating Confederate forces from East Tennessee but struggled to defend Ringgold, Georgia, and the Confederate supply line from the Federals. During the Battle of Chickamauga, the regiment, and the rest of Scott's brigade, successfully delayed Federal advances toward Ringgold. However, they missed an opportunity to significantly contribute to the Confederate victory by failing to disrupt Major General Gordon Granger as he moved his corps south and west to reinforce Major General George Thomas.

The regiment seems to have performed at its best during the period of time that the Army of Tennessee fought Sherman as he maneuvered from Chattanooga to Atlanta. By all accounts, the soldiers of the regiment fought hard to slow Sherman's advance in

²⁰⁸E. Raymond Evans and David Scott, *The Lookout Rangers: Colonel Henry Marshall Ashby and the 2nd Tennessee Cavalry Regiment* (Chattanooga, TN: E. Raymond Evans and David Scott, 2012), 76-77; Mohon, "Henry Ashby's 2nd Tennessee," 35-37. The state prosecutor felt that he did not have enough evidence to convict Camp of murder and dropped the charges against him. Newspapers in Knoxville were sharply divided in opinion regarding the feud between Camp and Ashby.

almost every engagement they participated in. As a part of Wheeler's cavalry corps, the regiment assisted in preventing the Confederate army's flank from being turned on several occasions. When Sherman marched from Atlanta, to Savannah, and then to North Carolina, the regiment, with the rest of Wheeler's corps, tried to slow Sherman's advance but were unsuccessful.

The regiment performed relatively well when conducting offensive operations during this time period. In both Pegram's and Scott's Kentucky raids, the regiment consistently demonstrated the ability to attack and defeat their enemy. As Sherman marched to Atlanta, the regiment successfully engaged with Steedman's Federal cavalry at Cassville. Their worst offensive engagement was at Red House Bridge, during the Battle of Chickamauga, when the regiment charged Federal infantry and artillery only to be ambushed.

Finally, the regiment seems to have suffered from readiness issues during this time period. Following the Battle of Chickamauga, the regiment was depleted in manpower and horses. When the regiment, and the rest of Scott's brigade, reported to Wheeler, a major reorganization took place in order to address the poor condition of the men and their horses. During the Winter of 1863-1864, indicators are that the regiment was understrength and that men who held the rank of captain were regularly in charge of the Second Tennessee Cavalry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In *On War*, Carl Von Clausewitz wrote that “war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.” The objective of all military action is, ultimately, to achieve a desired political end state. Therefore, according to Clausewitz, military objectives are established only after determining how they will help achieve the desired political objective. Although the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment was far removed from the Confederate government in Richmond, the successes and failures of the regiment at executing tactical tasks influenced the government’s chance of achieving the desired political end state of a separate and independent nation.²⁰⁹

In order to achieve military objectives, modern Army commanders assess problems found in the operating environment and, by applying the principles of Unified Land Operations, strive to effect the operational environment in such a way as to achieve the desired end state visualized by the commander. To determine if the actions of a military organization are effective, and moving the force toward achieving a particular end state, commanders and staff continuously assess the operational environment. Continual assessment of the environment not only allows the commander to gauge progress, but also allows him to determine if changes to his operational approach must be made.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69, 81.

²¹⁰U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2011), II-9.

Before an operation begins, a commander's staff identifies criteria to judge whether or not progress is being made toward an objective. At the tactical level, organizations use measures of effectiveness and measures of performance to assess a unit's progress. Measures of effectiveness are used to determine if the organization's actions are changing the operational environment in a way that advances the effort to achieve the desired end state. Measures of performance assess whether or not the actions of a military organization accomplish specific tasks. According to Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, measures of effectiveness help determine if a military organization is "doing the right things" and measures of performance help determine if the organization is "doing things right."²¹¹

To evaluate measures of effectiveness and measures of performance organizations use *indicators*. Essentially, indicators are items of information, or subordinate measures that help determine the status of a measure of effectiveness or measure of performance. When possible, they are measurable, collectable, and relevant. However, as Army Field Manual 6-0 *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* points out, interpretation of indicators requires human judgment and is ultimately susceptible to error and misinterpretation.²¹²

²¹¹Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 5-2; U.S. Joint Forces Command, II-10.

²¹²Headquarters, Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, 5-3; Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, 5-0.1, *Commander and Staff Officer Guide* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 2012), 7-4; Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 5 May 2014), 15-3.

In the context of this research, the historical narrative of the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment provides indicators that can be used to evaluate the unit's effectiveness and performance. Clausewitz outlines in *On War* that critical analysis of historical events can be complex and challenging. Like Army Field Manual 6-0, Clausewitz indicates that there are many opportunities for errors in judgment to be made when interpreting indicators, as in the case of analyzing military history. Nonetheless, Clausewitz acknowledges that it is "legitimate to judge an event by its outcome, for this is its soundest criterion." For this research, the outcomes of the military operations conducted by the Second Tennessee Cavalry will be used to judge whether the unit was effective.²¹³

If the ultimate goal of military action is to help achieve the political objective of a nation, then there is no question that the Confederate Army failed to accomplish this objective. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate the reasons why the Confederate Army was defeated. Obviously, as an extension of the Confederate Army, the Second Tennessee Cavalry was ineffective in bringing to fruition the political end state that the Confederate government desired. However, the question remains, was the Second Tennessee Cavalry effective in achieving its military objectives at the tactical and operational level.

At the outset of the war, one of the key objectives for Confederate political and military leaders was to prevent the Federal army from advancing through the Cumberland Gap and seizing control of East Tennessee. From 1861, until Major General Ambrose Burnside entered East Tennessee in 1863, the men of the Second Tennessee Cavalry spent a significant amount of time screening along the Cumberland Mountains north of

²¹³Clausewitz, *On War*, 166, 627, 710. See Chapters Five and Six of Book Two.

Knoxville. Along with Confederate infantry units, the Second Tennessee Cavalry played an important role in preventing the Federals from seizing control of East Tennessee.

Although one can argue that Federal forces never made a significant advance toward East Tennessee until 1863, President Abraham Lincoln clearly wanted his military leaders to seize control of the region early in the war. At the very least, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, and other Confederate military units operating in the Cumberland Mountains, were an effective deterrent against Federal military invasion into East Tennessee until Burnside took control of the region.

Throughout the war, the Second Tennessee Cavalry seems to have been most effective when conducting defensive operations. In the initial years of the war, the regiment was effective at providing security to both Confederate infantry and cavalry forces as they advanced north to conduct operations in Kentucky. At the Battle of Stones River, the regiment was effective at conducting counter reconnaissance and assisted Brigadier General John Wharton in delaying the Federal advance toward the Army of Tennessee. In the fall of 1863, as Confederate columns retreated from Tennessee into Georgia, the regiment successfully covered their movement south.

When Major General William Tecumseh Sherman advanced toward Atlanta, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, with the rest of Major General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry corps, played an important role in protecting the flanks of the Army of Tennessee while fighting in both mounted and dismounted positions. When Sherman advanced from Atlanta, south to Savannah, and then to North Carolina, the regiment, as a member of Wheeler's cavalry, tried to slow the Federal advance. However, they were ineffective in disrupting Sherman's movement during this time period. Nonetheless, when Confederate

commanders needed the regiment to execute defensive tasks, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, more often than not, was able to successfully execute its missions.

In contrast, the regiment seems to have struggled more when called upon to execute offensive operations. Following the Battle of Perryville, the Second Tennessee Cavalry was unable to successfully carry out an attack on one of Brigadier General Joshua Sill's supply trains. At Stones River, cavalry commander Brigadier General John Wharton stated that the regiment was "hard pressed" when conducting an attack on a Federal cavalry unit and had to be reinforced. At Chickamauga, the regiment attacked elements of Major General Gordon Granger's reserve corps, only to be ambushed as they moved toward their objective.

Despite these failures, the regiment was sometimes successful at conducting offensive operations. When Brigadier General George Morgan occupied Cumberland Gap, the regiment successfully conducted an attack on Federal troops at Cumberland Ford, effectively cutting Morgan's lines of communication. As Federal troops retreated from the battlefield at Chickamauga, the Second Tennessee Cavalry drove back elements of the 59th Ohio Infantry. Finally, when Sherman sent Brigadier General James Steedman and Brigadier General Edward McCook on a cavalry raid around Atlanta, the Second Tennessee Cavalry, within a detachment of Wheeler's force, destroyed McCook's command at Newnan, Georgia. Overall, the regiment had a mixed record at successfully executing offensive operations.

As a cavalry unit, the regiment was often called upon to perform reconnaissance missions to help Confederate commanders maintain a situational understanding of the enemy's activities. In 1861, Lieutenant Colonel George McClellan erroneously reported

the size of a Federal cavalry force which prompted his senior commander, Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer, to shift the bulk of the Department of East Tennessee toward Jamestown, Tennessee, from Cumberland Gap. While in Kentucky, Colonel Benjamin Allston's cavalry brigade, of which the Second Tennessee Cavalry belonged, struggled to report accurate information about the enemy's movements.

Despite these mistakes, the regiment was often successful at performing reconnaissance. In Kentucky, the Second Tennessee Cavalry informed Brigadier General John Pegram of a Federal advance from the north, allowing the cavalry commander to establish a defensive position near Somerset, Kentucky. When Morgan moved toward Cumberland Gap, the regiment kept Major General Kirby Smith informed of the Federal advance. Finally, as a member of Wheeler's corps, the regiment was effective at reporting Sherman's movement as he advanced from Tennessee to North Carolina. Overall, the regiment was effective at conducting reconnaissance operations.

The Second Tennessee Cavalry evolved over time to become an effective cavalry force for the Confederate Army. From the moment Tennessee seceded from the Union, to the surrender of General Joseph Johnston's Confederate Army in April 1865, the men of the regiment endeavored to execute their assigned missions. Although the Second Tennessee Cavalry did not always successfully execute its tasks, the regiment did effectively execute the majority of its missions. Overall, the Second Tennessee Cavalry Regiment was an effective organization for the Confederate Army.

ILLUSTRATIONS

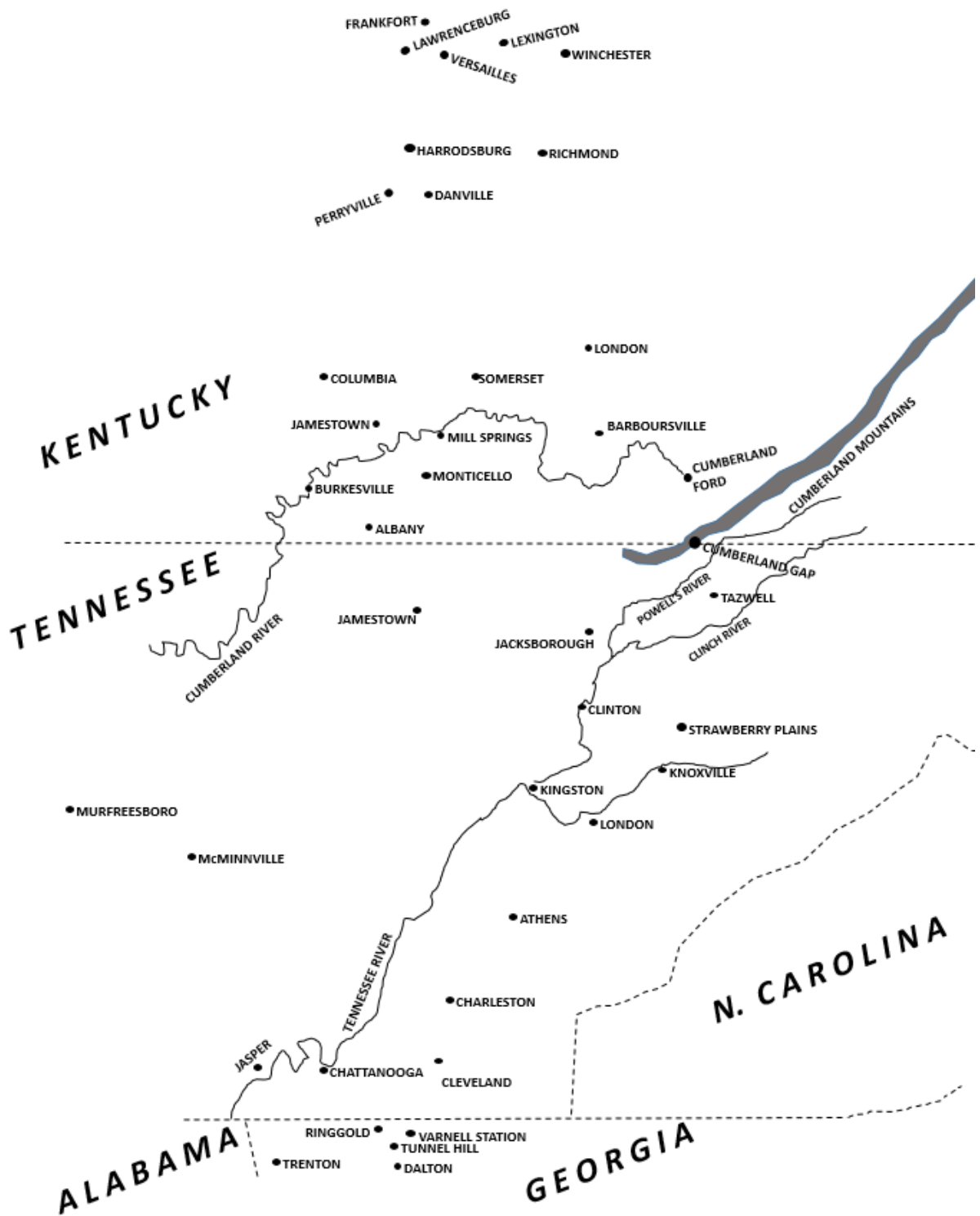


Figure 1. Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Georgia

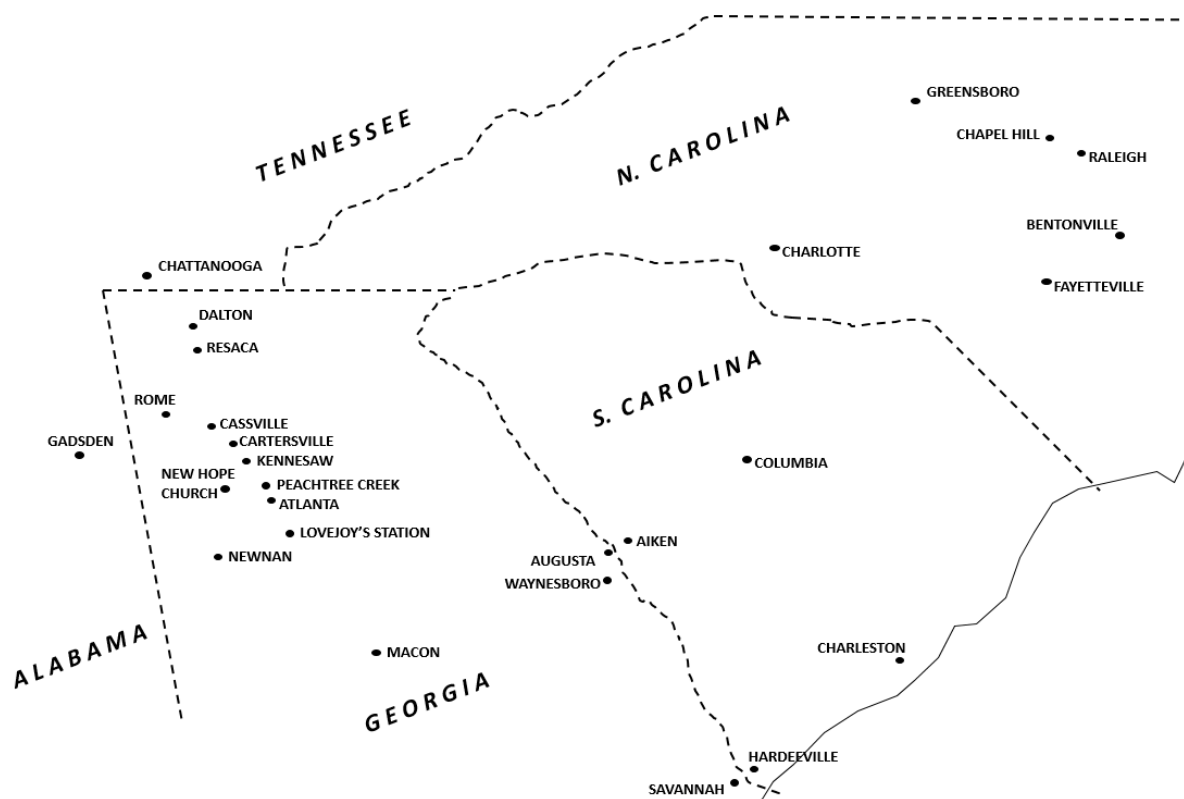


Figure 2. Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina

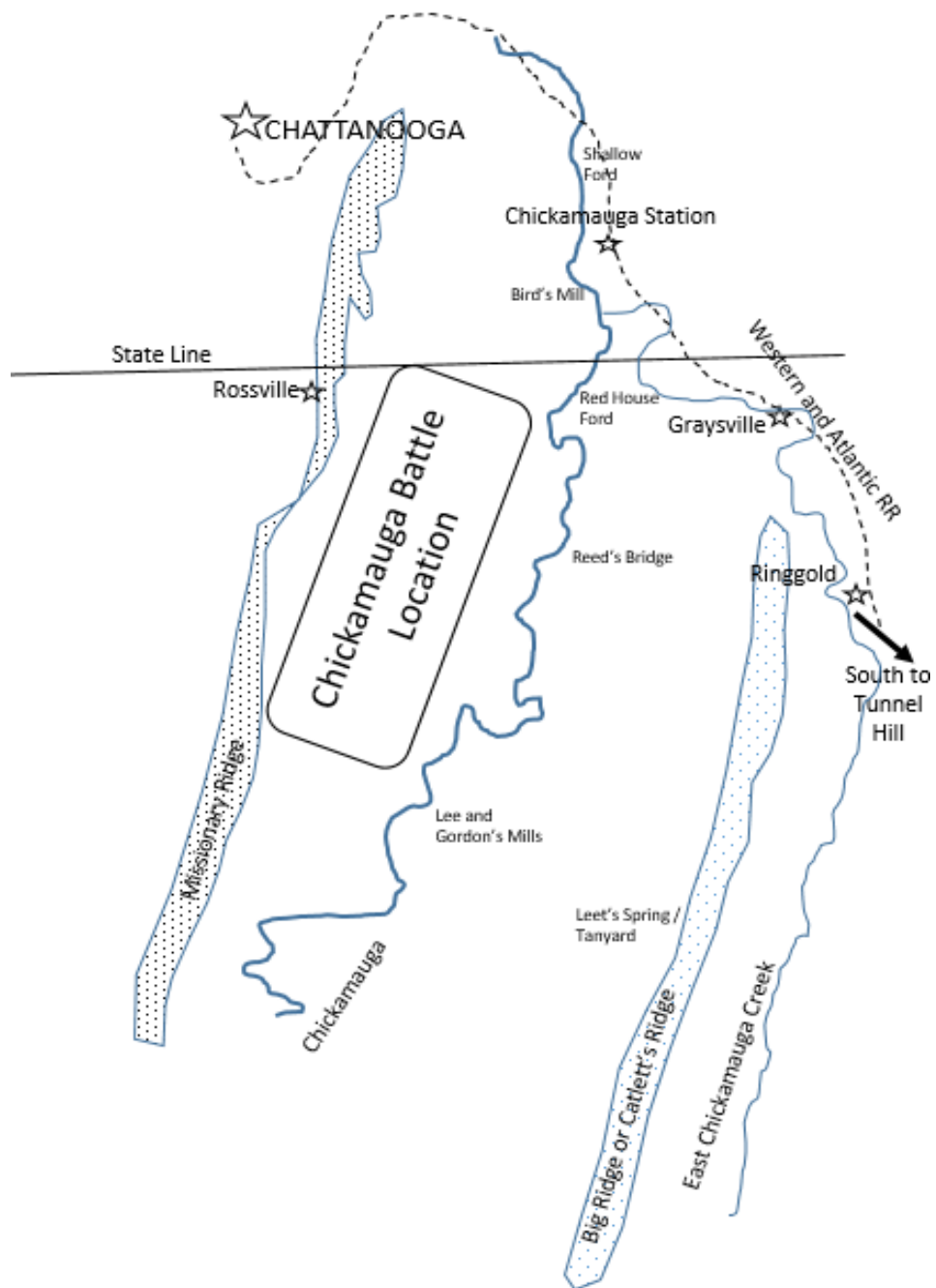


Figure 3. Chickamauga

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